

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

'Sideways' tops Golden Globe nomination list

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Paul Giamatti, left, and Thomas Haden Church



Guard death rate in Iraq higher than active duty

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Director depicts life of U.S. troops in Iraq

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Director Michael Tucker, left, Sgt. Cedric Edwards

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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2004

Seven Marines killed in weekend battles

Later, suicide car bomb takes 13 lives outside Green Zone Page 3

Four more set for postseason

Back page

Center: Colts quarterback Peyton Manning threw just two touchdown passes, but that was enough to beat the Texans and clinch the AFC South title. Indianapolis was one of four teams to earn division titles on Sunday. Top right: T.J. Duckett scores the third of his four touchdowns in the Falcons' rout of Oakland, which gave Atlanta the NFC South crown. Bottom right: Steelers free safety Chris Hope (28) is greeted by teammates Russell Starks (33) and Troy Palamalu (43) after Hope's interception sealed Pittsburgh's victory over the New York Jets and the AFC North title. Bottom left: Bengals linebacker Brian Simmons grabs the face mask of Corey Dillon, who earned his first trip to the playoffs by helping the Patriots beat his former team and win the AFC East. Those four join Philadelphia in the postseason, with the remaining slots still to be filled. Full game coverage Pages 26-30



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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Alaska freighter accident: The U.S. Coast Guard lowered a salvage team to a freighter that broke in two pieces when it ran aground off Alaska's coast, seen as a key step toward cleaning up a destructive, oily mess stretching for miles.

A helicopter with a three-person salvage team took off from nearby Dutch Harbor on Sunday afternoon to undertake the short flight to the 738-foot Selendang Ayu, wrecked Wednesday in rough seas. Strong winds and waves had kept authorities from boarding either half of the ship.

For days the Coast Guard had wanted to get a team on the vessel to determine how much of the 483,000 gallons of bunker oil and 21,000 gallons of diesel fuel had leaked into the sea. But bad weather hampered efforts before Sunday.

World

Fighting in Sudan: Cease-fire violations are on the rise in Sudan's bloodied Darfur region and the fighting is "poisoning" peace talks, where government and rebel negotiators met Monday for the first time, officials said.

Thirteen violations of a cease-fire agreement were confirmed in September and 54 were documented between October and mid-December, said Assane Ba, a spokesman for the African Union, which is mediating the talks.

"That means the violations are growing" in the western Sudan region, where the crisis has left tens of thousands dead and nearly 2 million homeless, Ba told reporters at the site of the talks in Nigeria's capital, Abuja.

"This is poisoning the atmosphere and we can't have meaningful negotiations in this situation," Ba said.

G-8 violence: A judge on Monday ordered 28 police officers to stand trial for their alleged brutality in a raid against anti-globalization protesters during the 2001 Group of Eight summit in Genoa, court officials said.

The start of the trial was set for April 6, according to the office of Genoa judge Daniela Faraggi, who made the ruling.

The pre-dawn raid on the Diaz school in Genoa, which housed many protesters, was one of the most controversial episodes of the July 2001 summit. Some protesters said they were attacked as they slept.

Police said they were acting on a tip that violent demonstrators were hiding in the school.

Ethiopia-Eritrea border dispute: German President Horst Kohler on Monday urged Ethiopia and neighboring Eritrea to peacefully settle their border dispute, saying neither country could afford another conflict. The Horn of Africa nations could not finance a repeat of their 1998-2000 border war, which cost each country an estimated \$1 million.

Ethiopia last month accepted "in principle" a ruling on its shared border with Eritrea that was made as a part of a peace deal ending the 2½-year war. The ruling was made by an internationally appointed commission.



Philippine market explosion: Authorities said Monday that they have identified several suspects but made no arrests as they probed a possible business feud behind a bombing that killed at least 15 people in a southern Philippine market packed with Christmas shoppers. Both Muslim and communist rebels operate in General Santos, about 620 miles south of Manila, where a homemade bomb went off in the market on Sunday. At least 70 people were wounded, and some were in critical condition. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Taiwan presidential shooting: Taiwanese investigators said on Monday they've detained five suspects allegedly involved in making and selling the bullets used in the bizarre shooting that lightly injured the president on the eve of his re-election.

The arrests could be the biggest break in an investigation that has dragged on for months without producing many solid leads. The lack of progress has fed popular conspiracy theories that President Chen Shui-bian staged the March 19 attack to win last-minute sympathy voters.

The five suspects, who were involved with an illegal weapons workshop, were detained late last month in Tainan, the southern city where the president and Vice President Annette Lu were shot while parading in an open Jeep, said Wang Shen-jong, chief prosecutor in Tainan.

Japanese abductions: Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Monday called North Korea's abduction of Japanese nationals decades ago "unjust and abominable" acts, as public pressure mounted on him to use economic sanctions to punish Pyongyang for the kidnappings.

Tokyo said it won't immediately punish North Korea with sanctions, despite calls to do so after forensic tests last week showed that human remains Pyongyang claimed belonged to a Japanese kidnapping victim turned out to belong to someone else.

Koizumi said he was aware of voters' demands for tougher action against Pyongyang.

Canada same-sex marriages: Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin was cool to the idea of a national referendum on gay marriage and said Parliament should decide the issue.

Canada's Supreme Court ruled Thursday that gay marriage was constitutional, a landmark opinion allowing the federal government to call on Parliament to legalize same-sex unions nationwide.

Alberta Premier Ralph Klein has said he wants a national referendum on gay marriage.

"I think that this is an issue that Parliamentarians ought to decide," Martin said Sunday before addressing a brunch in Montreal. "The courts have now given their direction. I think it's one for Parliament and I think that Parliament ought to accept their responsibility."

Nuclear watchdog post: Australia's foreign minister declined to comment Monday on a newspaper report that he had turned down a U.S. request to challenge International Atomic Energy Agency head Mohamed ElBaradei for his job.

The Washington Post reported Sunday that the administration of President Bush wants Alexander Downer to take over the role because it regards ElBaradei as too soft on Iran's suspected nuclear program.

The newspaper also said that Washington bugged the phone of ElBaradei, an Egyptian diplomat who has headed the atomic agency since 1997, scrutinizing his calls in search of reasons to call for his ouster.

Stories and photo from The Associated Press

Correction

An Associated Press story and a Page 1 headline in Monday's edition about an Afghanistan marathon contained inaccurate information. The event was not the nation's first marathon.

**Comics, horoscopes and advice,
every day in Stars and Stripes**

Marines killed in Anbar province

Al-Qaida-linked suicide bombing near Green Zone kills at least 13

By PAUL GARWOOD

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — The U.S. Marines lost seven of its own Sunday in fighting in the Anbar province, the worst day for the Marines since October.

Meanwhile, an al-Qaida-linked suicide bomber blew up his vehicle Monday near cars waiting to enter the Green Zone, home to the U.S. Embassy and Iraq's interim government, killing 13 Iraqis on the first anniversary of Saddam Hussein's capture.

The seven Marines died in an action Sunday in the volatile Anbar province west of Baghdad, the deadliest day for the Marines since eight of their service members were killed by a car bomb Oct. 30 outside Fallujah.

The deaths brought to nearly 1,300 the number of American troops killed in Iraq since the invasion in March 2003.

It was unclear where in Anbar the Marines were killed, but the province includes the turbulent cities of Ramadi and Fallujah, the latter of which witnessed a bloody weekend offensive last month to uproot extremist Islamic militants.

A suicide car bomber detonated his explosives-packed car near a checkpoint leading into central Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, killing 13 Iraqis and wounding 15 others in an attack for which Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's al-Qaida in Iraq group claimed credit. No U.S. troops were injured.

A U.S. soldier with the 1st Corps Support Command was killed and another wounded Mon-

day in a vehicle accident near a military base in Balad, 50 miles north of Baghdad. It was unclear what caused the accident.

On Sunday, American jets dropped 10 precision-guided missiles on rebel positions in Fallujah after insurgents fought running battles with coalition forces.

"We are still running into some of these die-hard insurgents that have either come back into the city or have been laying low," spokesman Lt. Lyle Gilbert said. "As we are bringing in contractors to help with the reconstruction of Fallujah, this (fighting) slows the process down."

Further west in Ramadi, 10 explosions were heard early Monday.

No details were immediately available on what caused them nor if there were casualties. The blasts came a day after insurgents and Marines traded artillery fire that killed one woman.

A U.S. Stryker brigade patrol was attacked by a car bomb in Mosul, 225 miles northwest of Baghdad, on Monday, wounding two American soldiers. U.S. troops and gunmen fought gun battles after the blast.

In Tarmiyah, on Baghdad's northern outskirts, three more U.S. troops were wounded by a car bomb blast that wrecked two Humvees, pieces of which were raised into the air by jubilant Iraqi men who danced around their charred hulks as a large crater blown into the road by the explosion.

Eight of Saddam's 11 detained top lieutenants won on hunger strikes over the weekend to demand jail visits from the interna-



A U.S. soldier secures the area Monday after a car bomb attack in Baghdad. A suicide bomber killed 13 people in the attack near the heavily fortified area in central Baghdad housing the interim government and U.S. embassy.

tional Committee of the Red Cross, but were eating again by Monday, a U.S. military spokesman said. The former dictator never joined the protest. "They don't acknowledge the legality of their trials or their intent," said the lawyer, Bader Izat Aref, an Iraqi appointed by the family of former Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz.

It was impossible to say if the apparent protest was timed to the anniversary of Saddam's capture.

The detainees have been held for months in an undisclosed location, believed to be near the Baghdad International Airport, west of the capital.

In Rome, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zehari assured Pope John Paul II that Saddam and other former regime members would be treated fairly and brought to trial as soon as possible after the January elections.

"The same justice they denied us we are going to give it to them," he said.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Sunday, at least 1,289 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,007 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is seven higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Friday.

The British military has reported 74 deaths, Italy, 19; Poland, 13; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,151 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 898 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ A U.S. Marine was killed Sunday in action in Anbar province.

■ A U.S. soldier was killed Saturday by a roadside bomb in Baghdad's northern suburbs.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ Army Chief Warrant Officer Patrick J. Leahy, 36, Rock Hill, S.C., and Army 1st Lt. Andrew C. Shields, 25, Campobello, S.C.

Both soldiers were killed Thursday in a helicopter accident in Mosul, Iraq; assigned to the 1st Battalion, 151st Aviation Regiment, South Carolina National Guard, Columbia, S.C.

Newspaper: Guard soldiers more likely to die in Iraq than active-duty troops

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Unlike in past wars, National Guard soldiers are about one-third more likely to be killed in Iraq than their full-time counterparts on active duty, a USA Today analysis of Pentagon statistics says.

According to figures furnished by the military branches, the active Army has sent about 250,000 soldiers to Iraq, and 622 have been killed. That works out to one death for every 402 soldiers who have deployed, USA Today reported in its Monday editions.

About 37,000 Army Guard soldiers have been sent to Iraq and 140 have died there — one fatality for every 264 soldiers who have served, or about a 35 percent higher death rate.

There are several reasons for the greater death rates among

so-called part-time soldiers. The Pentagon has called up thousands of part-time troops for tours of a year or more in Iraq. Some of the most dangerous missions, including driving convoys and guarding bases and other facilities, frequently are assigned to Guard and reserve troops.

But the casualty rates have spiked during major battles such as the attack on Fallujah, largely carried out by Army and Marine troops. But such engagements have been rare since President Bush declared major combat over in May 2003.

The elevated death rates among part-time soldiers are a significant shift from the past, USA Today reported. During most wars in the last century, the full-time military took most of the casualties, and their troops were much more likely to die in battle than Guardsmen and reservists.

Mortar attack on U.S. base injures three Afghan soldiers

The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Insurgents rained mortar rounds on a U.S. base in Afghanistan, wounding three Afghan government soldiers, while American and Afghan officials announced Monday the arrests of 14 suspected Taliban.

Eleven mortar rounds fell near the base in southwestern Paktika province in the past 24 hours, a U.S. military spokesman said.

The wounded soldiers from the new U.S.-trained Afghan National Army were evacuated to a field hospital at a larger U.S. base in neighboring Khost province and were in stable condition, said Maj. Mark McCann.

No American soldiers were reported hurt in the incident.

McCann said eight Taliban members were detained in a raid about a week ago in Char Cheno district of Central Uruzgan province after American forces received intelligence on their whereabouts.

One was believed to be a brother of the former Taliban governor of Kandahar, the southern city that was the headline regime's capital. McCann declined to give his name.

Afghan troops seized another six suspected Taliban in the same province on Saturday, Defense Ministry spokesman Gen. Zaher Mohammed Azimi said. Two were Taliban commanders killed Mullah Ghulam Nahim and Abdul Qadir, he said.

Azimi also reported the wounding of six Afghan civilians in an explosion Saturday near Asadabad, in eastern Kunar province. Three were taken to the main U.S. base at Bagram, north of Kabul, where they were recovering after treatment, he said.

The cause of the explosion was unclear, though the area has seen a spate of roadside bombings aimed at Afghan and U.S. security forces as well as clashes between rival Afghan factions.

About 18,000 mainly American troops continue to hunt militants in southern and eastern Afghanistan, three years after U.S. and allied forces ended the headline Taliban regime for harboring al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden.

The U.S.-led force last week began a fresh winter-long offensive aimed at weakening rebels ahead of parliamentary elections slated for the spring, and at persuading Taliban foot-soldiers to accept an Afghan government amnesty.

At Balad Air Base, it's service on the run

Incoming planes outgoing in a matter of minutes

BY RON JENSEN

Stars and Stripes



PHOTOS BY RON JENSEN/Stars and Stripes

Senior Airman Roberto Vasquez of the 332nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron (Aerial Port Flight) uses green glow sticks to guide a cargo loader to a C-17 aircraft ramp Sunday night at Balad Air Base, Iraq.



Airmen of the 332nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron unload a C-17 cargo plane Sunday night at Balad Air Base. Because of the possibility of attack, the planes sometimes are unloaded in eight minutes.

When the plane stops, someone jumps on the opened ramp and begins signaling the K-loader to approach. Others climb aboard and, with the help of the aircraft crew, prepare the pallets for movement. As one machine moves away from the ramp with a load, another slips in.

Observers of this flight line "Swan Lake" have to watch closely. The curtain falls in little more

"To us, it's like a ballet. It's all choreographed."

Tech. Sgt. Todd Lunge

"We always try to get them turned as quickly as we can, safely," said Capt. Rob Neal, the flight commander.

The team can unload a cavernous C-17 Globemaster, one of the largest planes in the inventory, in about a third of the time it takes at most stateside bases. Airman 1st Class Thomas Hill said,

"Average, I would say eight minutes, compared to a normal time of 30 to 35 minutes back home," at Dover Air Force Base, Del., Hill said.

The chase is quite exciting to watch.

The aircraft — be it a C-130 Hercules, a C-141 Starlifter or a C-5 Galaxy — lands and taxis to a spot under the direction of Detachment 5, 721st Air Mobility Operations Group.

Airmen race to the plane with one or more K-loaders, the flat self-propelled vehicles on which the aircraft's load is placed, or forklifts, whichever is required.

"To us, it's like a ballet. It's all choreographed," Tech. Sgt. Todd Lunge said. "I like just watching it sometimes."

than the blink of an eye. The air-planes engines run the whole time Airmen remove the cargo. The Air Force calls this an engine running offload.

And although there is no instant replay if you miss it, there's always another aircraft right behind.

"A lot of times, we're running from one plane to another," Airman Derik Pitts said.

Hill remembered when four C-17s, two C-5s and three C-130s landed within a few minutes of each other. The race began anew.

That's another difference from back home. At Dover and other stateside bases, the planes have some idea of when to expect an aircraft.

"Here," Hill said, "they just drop out of the sky."

"First come, first served," Pitts said.

It is hard to compare them with other aerial ports in the Air Force.

No one really keeps track of such things, but Charleston Air Force Base, S.C., and Dover are considered the busiest.

"I can guarantee you, we're a lot busier than Charleston," Neal said. Plus, he said, he has a fraction — perhaps a quarter — of the people back home.

Lunge said, however, that the effort can get out of hand. That's when injuries occur.

"One at a time," he said. "That's what I tell them. We don't take safety for granted."

There's another hitch in the effort. Occasionally, Iraqi insurgents fire a mortar shell or rocket from beyond the wire, interrupting the loading process.

"We're all out here and — Boom! What was that?" Lunge said.

Work stops, of course, and "everybody runs for cover," Neal said.

Because of the attacks, the aircraft crews don't like to dawdle. Their aircraft make large, inviting targets.

Some aircraft are often airborne again 21 minutes after landing, Neal said, meaning the aerial port flight at Balad has some very appreciative customers.

"Oh yes, they care," he said. "It's like the flying crews. 'They like it. They like the work we do.'"

E-mail Ron Jensen at: jensenr@mail.estrp.esd.mil

Airmen become jacks-of-all-trades when servicing aircraft at Balad

BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq — The airmen of Detachment 5, 721st Air Mobility Operations Group are like parking attendants.

They marshal the aircraft at Balad to the right spot on the ramp for unloading. Then they guide them out for takeoff.

It's a pretty standard Air Force task, said Maj. Grant Izzi, the detachment commander, who is stationed at Guam.

"The mission is a little different in that the aircraft don't stay on the ground very long," he said.

For example, he said, a C-17 Globemaster might spend two or three hours at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, home of the 721st AMOG headquarters.

"Normally, [at Balad] a C-17 is on the ground only 30 minutes or so," said Izzi. "It's a very high volume, fast-paced ramp out here. I've never seen a pace like this."

He sees more C-5 Galaxies in Balad in one week, he said, than he sees in Guam in one month.

Plus, he said, his airmen handle 16 different types of military and civilian aircraft, more than they would see just about anywhere.

The airmen also perform standard checks and needed maintenance on the planes to get them airborne again.

"I have many different flavors of personnel," he said of the nearly 40 people in the detachment. "I have F-15 guys, C-130 guys. I have F-16 guys. Of course, C-5, C-17 and the last of the C-141 guys and gals."

The C-141 Starlifter was phased out of active-duty service in September but is still used by some Air National Guard and Reserve units.

One of Izzi's guys is Staff Sgt. Jason Harrell, an

F-15 crew chief stationed at Elmendorf, Alaska. Since arriving at Balad, he has guided and worked on more aircraft than ever before in his six-year Air Force career.

"It's an experience I never could have gotten [anywhere else]," Harrell said. "I'll probably never mess with some of them ever again."

Although the detachment includes personnel with skills for nearly every military aircraft — they don't touch the civilian planes — some people were cross-trained to handle tasks outside their specialty.

Some learn to refuel various aircraft, others to replenish the oxygen tanks. Still others learn how to tow aircraft they've never towed before.

Like everyone at Balad and the adjoining Logistics Support Area Anascondo, the airmen of the 721st AMOG have to deal with rocket and mortar attacks.

"When we hear the red alert, we have to get everybody off the ramp," Harrell said. After an attack, they must search the flight line and ramp for any unexploded ordnance.

The attacks notwithstanding, Harrell said, the airmen feel like they are part of the fight to clear Iraq of insurgents. The cargo they handle is bringing to the country is directly related to that effort.

"I feel I am [helping out]," he said. "I'm sure everybody does. I hope they do."

Izzi said he knows his airmen feel a part of the fight. He has seen them volunteer to load patients onto the medical evacuation flights leaving the base regularly.

"If nothing else does," he said, "that grabs you."

— Ron Jensen

6 GLs court-martialed for taking vehicles in Iraq

BY JOHN MCCARTHY

The Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — At a time when some U.S. troops in Iraq are complaining they have to scrounge for equipment, six Ohio-based reservists were court-martialed for taking Army vehicles abandoned in Kuwait by other units so they could carry out their own unit's mission to Iraq.

The soldiers say they needed the vehi-

cles, and parts stripped from one, to deliver fuel to Iraq, but their former battalion commander said Sunday the troops should at least have returned the vehicles to their original units.

Members of the 656th Transportation Company based in Springfield, west of Columbus, said they needed the equipment to deliver fuel that was needed by U.S. forces in Iraq for everything from helicopters to tanks.

The reservists took two tractor-trailers and stripped parts from a five-ton truck that had been abandoned in Kuwait by other units that had already moved into Iraq, one of the reservists, Darrell Birt of Columbus, said Sunday.

Birt, a former chief warrant officer, and the others were charged with theft, destruction of Army property and conspiracy to cover up their crimes.

Birt said he and two others pleaded

guilty and the other three were convicted. All received six-month sentences.

"Nobody ever reported these trucks stolen. The deal was, when you are moving, if it was going to take more than 30 minutes to fix it, you left it," said Birt, who was released in November.

"I'm a Christian man and I can't ignore what we did, but it was justified to get us in the fight and to sustain the fight."

Year after Saddam was captured, trial prospects uncertain

BY NICK WADHAMS

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — In the year since he was captured and held in a secret location, Saddam Hussein has taken up gardening, undergone a hernia operation and written poetry that one visitor describes as "rubbishy."

What he has not done is meet with any of the 20 lawyers claiming to represent him. And with the country in the grips of an insurgency, predicting when Iraq's most famous prisoner will be tried is easier now than it was on the day he was pulled from his hiding spot in a spider hole near his hometown of Tikrit.

When Saddam first appeared before an Iraqi court in July, some officials predicted a swift trial. Ever since, they have said October, November or December. Now, they expect it no earlier than the beginning of 2006, Iraq's National Security Adviser Mowafak al-Rubaie said.

"This is going to be probably the trial of the century and we have to get it right," al-Rubaie said. "We can't suddenly try him and sentence him to either life in prison or whatever, execute him 100 times as some people want to do."

American officials with the Department of Justice's Regime Crimes Liaison Office are advis-

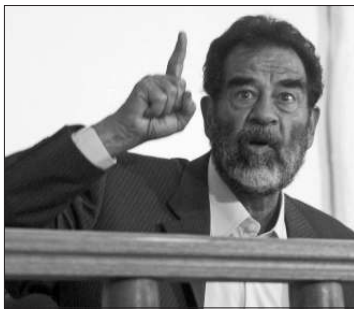
ing the Iraqi Special Tribunal on the process of bringing Saddam to trial. The Americans paid the tribunal's budget of \$75 million for 2004-2005. But with elections approaching Jan. 30, the Iraqi government is in flux and likely to stay that way for another year until a new constitution is drafted and another round of elections is held in December 2005.

Trainers also face a dearth of qualified Iraqi prosecutors, defense lawyers and judges. If proper attorneys are found, they assume a new kind of risk — threats from the guerrillas, believed to be mostly Sunni Muslims like Saddam, or others trying to stymie the trial.

Few Iraqi lawyers are willing to represent Saddam, while prosecutors face challenging him. The same goes for the judges overseeing the case, slowing its work.

"At various points in time they have had a number of judges who have since withdrawn," said Hania Mufi, a spokeswoman for New York-based Human Rights Watch who has followed the case. "So that's been a practical problem on the ground."

That fact has been sobering for the Americans, who predicted Saddam's capture would cripple the insurgency. They portrayed violence immediately after his capture as the last gasp of desperate loyalists.



In July, Saddam Hussein appeared in a courtroom at Camp Victory, at a former palace on the outskirts of Baghdad. In the year since Saddam was captured and hustled away to a secret location, officials say the work of gathering evidence, documents, mass grave sites, and testimony from victims, continues away from the public eye.

"Saddam's era is over," the Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, Gen. Richard Myers, said days after Saddam was captured. "But it takes time for people to accept the changes."

Since then, the guerrillas have continued exacting a bloody toll against U.S. troops and their Iraqi allies.

The United States is increasing troop levels to 150,000, higher than they were when the war began, in hopes of providing safety for next month's elections.

Saddam first appeared before the court July 1, without a lawyer.

He was presented with seven preliminary charges that included gassing thousands of Kurds in

1988, the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the suppression of 1991 revolts by Kurds and Shiites, the murders of religious and political leaders and the mass displacement of Kurds in the 1980s.

Eleven other defendants were arraigned with him.

Eight of Saddam Hussein's 11 top lieutenants went on hunger strikes over the weekend to demand visits in jail from the International Committee of the Red Cross, but they were eating again by Monday, a U.S. military spokesman said. The former dictator had never joined the protest, the spokesman said.

Associated Press reporter Jamal Halaby in Amman, Jordan, contributed to this report.

Iraq leader knocks security decisions

The Associated Press

LONDON — Iraq's interim President Ghazi al-Yawer said in an interview broadcast Monday that the U.S.-led coalition was wrong to dissuade the Iraqi security forces.

"Definitely dissolving the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior was a big mistake at that time," al-Yawer told British Broadcasting Corp. radio.

"We could have screened people out instead of screening them in and this could have saved us a lot of hassle and problems," he said. The BBC said it spoke to al-Yawer in London, where he was briefly stopping after a visit to the United States.

Critics of the U.S.-led invasion say the decision to disband the 400,000-strong Iraqi army and to purge the state of members of Saddam Hussein's Baath party has contributed to chaos and helped fuel insurgency in post-war Iraq.

Al-Yawer said the security situation wouldn't be resolved unless Iraq's own security forces were "100 percent efficient."

"As soon as we have efficient security forces that we can depend on we can see the beginning of the withdrawal of forces from our friends and partners and I think it doesn't take years, it will take months," he said.

USAID director defends pace of Iraq reconstruction

BY NICK WADHAMS

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A top USAID official acknowledged Monday that Iraqis have reasons to be impatient with the pace of reconstruction since the U.S.-led war to oust Saddam Hussein, but said \$4.3 billion has been earmarked for projects and promised improvement despite the insurgency.

Andrew Natios, administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, detailed several projects under way in Iraq, including construction of 13 water-treatment plants and a

major new power station, as well as hundreds of schools, firehouses, clinics and police stations.

But he insisted the most important work in Iraq isn't necessarily visible, including building institutions, getting civil society groups off the ground and doing preventive maintenance.

"The most important work we do is not the physical infrastructure, even though I know all of you like to report on it," Natios told a news conference inside the Green Zone, the highly fortified area home to the U.S. Embassy and other government offices in Baghdad.

But Natios, fielding pointed questions from Arabic-speaking journalists about reconstruction, defended more visible U.S. work, which some Iraqis say is taking far too long. He said it takes months to build power plants.

He spoke in the middle of a power outage that cut electricity to a large swath of the country. Baghdad went dark, though power in the Green Zone is supplied by generators and was not cut. "I know people are impatient," Natios said. "They have a reason to be impatient, but I think progress is being made and the money is being spent appropriately."

Iraq's infrastructure fell into near ruin under years of U.N. sanctions and was further crippled in the U.S.-led invasion and its aftermath. Iraq's insurgents have frequently targeted reconstruction projects, bombing schools, clinics and community centers sometimes days after they're built.

Natios said USAID had earmarked \$86 million to support Iraq's electoral commission and nongovernment organizations ahead of Jan. 30 elections. He said 9,000 Iraqi businesses have been registered, and 35,000 Iraqis were employed in construc-

tion work with contracts through his agency.

"There is an insurgency going on," Natios said. "However, Iraqis have met with us and determined to rebuild their country and establish the foundation for enduring democracy."

He also pointed to a "university linkages" program connecting five Iraqi universities with five in the United States and five in Europe, which he said was "one of the most important things we're doing."

Natios said that of the \$5.3 billion USAID has allocated, \$4.3 billion had been assigned to specific projects so far.

New movie highlights 1st AD's Iraq mission

'Gunner Palace' to show in stateside theaters in February

BY TERRY BOYD
Stars and Stripes

BAUMHOLTER, Germany — Filmmaker Michael Tucker is perplexed. The Berlin-based documentary maker asks why America doesn't seem to care about the Iraq war or the American soldiers who are fighting it.

America, he says, has lost interest in the war and turned the channel to "Survivor" and "American Idol."

"My friends say, 'You're obsessed with this war,'" Tucker said in a telephone interview from his Berlin office. "I say, 'How can you not be?' The American people have no idea what life is like for these soldiers."

Tucker, a Seattle native, has channeled his obsession into "Gunner Palace," the first feature-length film about the Iraq war, a film that he says is from the perspective of the soldiers themselves.

It's a film that may do for the 1st Armored Division's 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment — nicknamed "Gunners" — what HBO's "Band of Brothers" did for Easy Company of the 101st Airborne Division: Make them into American icons.

The movie is set to open Feb. 11 in six U.S. markets, then expand the following week to 15 markets. Tucker said he hopes to have pre-release screenings next month at major U.S. posts, such as Fort Bragg, N.C., and Fort Drum, N.Y., but those plans are not yet complete.

Tucker spent a total of two months between September 2003 and April 2004 living with the unit at what soldiers call "Oda's Love Shack," a partly bombed-out palace on the Euphrates River where Saddam Hussein's son, Oda, brought paramours for trysts.

The regiment set up headquarters at the palace complex, which they nicknamed "Gunnerland," while patrolling Al-Adhamiya, one of the most volatile sectors of Baghdad. Tucker accompanied soldiers



Photo courtesy of Michael Tucker

Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery soldiers pose outside one of Saddam Hussein's palaces in Al-Adhamiya.

on countless missions and simply hung out with the troops. He said that left him with a sympathetic view of his soldiers that strongly runs through the film in an image colored by soldiers' abuses of Iraqi captives at Abu Ghraib prison.

"I tended to give soldiers the benefit of the doubt," he said. "They didn't 'sandbag' detainees (place sandbags over their heads). It shocked me you didn't see rougher treatment of detainees" given the constant threat level."

He did see, over time, mounting frustration among troops over the language barrier, and the fatigue of working nearly around the clock.

"It's a bunch of 20-year-old kids who just want to survive," he said.

Gunnerland was a world between the reality of raids and attacks and the "real" world via the Internet, phones and the

media, Tucker said. There were the funny moments, when soldiers would pull up to find suspects conveniently waiting to be caught, and darker moments when the U.S. troops rammed Humvees into houses, only to find out they had the wrong targets, he said.

Tucker said his goal is to show Americans — without being voyeuristic, political or patronizing — a world that he finds inspiring and terrifying.

He quotes one of the men he calls "soldier-poets": "It's like (Sp.) Richmond Shaw said: 'For y'all this is just a show, but we live in this movie.'"

Tucker and his partner, Petra Epperlein, have shown "Gunner Palace" at the Telluride Film Festival in Colorado and the Toronto Film Festival in Canada to enthusiastic reviews.

It is said Tucker, art out of pain.

It was painful getting to know and respect soldiers and officers such as Sgt. Maj. Eric F. Cooke and Capt. Ben Colgan before they died in separate attacks, he said.

After that, he said, he couldn't make "something rah-rah." But neither could he make a film disrespectful of soldiers. Tucker said: "I most like that it shows them being them."

Tucker succeeded in keeping the film "apolitical," said Jon Powers, 26, a former 2-3 Field Artillery captain, now a schoolteacher in Buffalo, N.Y.

"It's a great movie... for soldiers to see, and... for their families and friends to see if they want to understand what we went through for 14 months," said Powers, who saw "Gunner Palace" at the Toronto Film Festival in September.

The film is, he said, an accurate depiction of daily life made by a filmmaker given extraordinary access by Lt. Col. Bill Rabena, the battalion commander. Attempts by Stars and Stripes to reach Rabena were unsuccessful.

"People always ask me if there was censorship, if I had trouble getting access and all those issues," Tucker said.

Instead, he said, he had unrestricted access to soldiers in their off hours, to all missions and even to interrogations of suspected Iraqi insurgents. "They embraced your being there," Tucker said. "People just want their story told."

Whether the regiment's soldiers will be able to go to the local base theater to watch themselves on the big screen remains unclear. Army and Air Force Exchange Service executives say that's unlikely, unless a major distributor with whom AAFES has a contractual relationship picks up the film, and it goes into wide release, said Judd Anwar, media brand manager at AAFES headquarters in Dallas.

Viewers should be prepared for what Powers calls "some down-and-dirty" footage, including a scene where soldiers are "playing guitars and belting out songs," a peaceful moment interrupted by a mortar attack. "But once [the audience] gets over the shock, it will get a conversation started..." The guys who went with me to see it said, 'Is that what it was really like?'... I said, 'Yeah.'"

E-mail Terry Boyd at: boydt@mid.estripes.osd.mil

Pakistan denies allowing CIA on its soil to hunt for bin Laden

BY MUNIR AHMAD
The Associated Press

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Pakistan on Monday said there was no evidence that al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden is hiding in the country, and denied it had allowed CIA agents to hunt for him up bases along its border to hunt the terror mastermind.

Pakistan and American generals agree that the trail for the al-Qaida leader has gone cold, more than three years after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Mian Khan said bin Laden had not been seen anywhere, and scoffed at reports he might be hiding in Chitral, in the country's scenic north.

"Osama bin Laden has not been sighted in Chitral or in any other part of Pakistan," Khan

said, adding, "there are no operations being conducted by U.S. forces inside Pakistan."

President Gen. Pervez Musharraf has previously acknowledged that a small number of American experts were working with Pakistani troops in operations against al-Qaida militants.

But he has denied that U.S. forces — deployed in neighboring Afghanistan — are actively hunting bin Laden in Pakistan.

A report in Monday's New York Times, citing anonymous U.S. officials, said the CIA had set up small bases along the border in late 2003, but that the operations were being hampered by uncooperative Pakistani minders. It said the CIA had concluded bin Laden was being sheltered by tribesmen and foreign militants in northwestern Pakistan, and that he could be aiming to launch

a "spectacular" attack on the United States.

The issue is a sensitive one for Musharraf, who is under pressure at home from hard-liners opposed to his strong ties with Washington.

"There are no CIA cells in Pakistan in our tribal areas, and there is absolutely no truth in this New York Times report," said army spokesman Maj. Gen. Shaukat Sultan.

Some believe bin Laden is hiding along the rugged border.

In an interview televised Sunday, Afghan President Hamid Karzai said bin Laden was "definitely" in the region, but didn't say where.

A senior Pakistani counterterrorism official said Monday U.S. officials had not found intelligence on bin Laden's whereabouts, although their information had helped nab some al-Qaida suspects in Pakistan.

Rights group: 2 more Afghan detainees die in U.S. custody

BY STEPHEN GRAHAM
The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Human Rights Watch said Monday it had uncovered two more cases of prisoners dying in American custody in Afghanistan, and it accused the Bush administration of "dragging its feet" on investigations that could have prevented the abuse of prisoners in Iraq.

In an open letter to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the New York-based rights group said it had new evidence of "an alleged murder of a detainee by four U.S. military personnel" in Afghanistan in 2002. More recently, it said a man picked up on Sept. 24, 2004, died the next day at an American base, but it did not specify the cause of death.

"It's time for the United States to come clean about

crimes committed by U.S. forces in Afghanistan," said Brad Adams, the group's Asia division director. "The United States has set serious about prosecuting people implicated in prisoner deaths and mistreatment."

U.S. military officials in Afghanistan had no immediate comment on the alleged new cases highlighted in the letter.

Col. Justin Skinner said defense officials went to "enormous lengths to investigate any credible allegations of detainee abuse."

"We've looked at detention operations from A to Z," he said, without specifically discussing the cases raised by Human Rights Watch.

Military investigators are already examining the deaths of several prisoners in U.S. custody here, but have released few of their findings.



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IN THE STATES

Rehnquist to skip voting on some cases

BY GINA HOLLAND
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist has been out of voting in some of the Supreme Court cases he missed this fall while receiving treatment for thyroid cancer, a court spokeswoman said Monday.

Rehnquist, who has been absent from the bench for nearly two months, will not vote in cases that were heard in November, unless the remaining eight justices are deadlocked. He does plan to participate in the cases argued in December, Supreme Court spokeswoman Kathy Arberg said.

The announcement came after the Supreme Court released four opinions, two without Rehnquist's involvement. Monday was the Supreme Court's final work day before a nearly monthlong holiday break. Rehnquist, 80, has been working from his home in suburban Virginia while undergoing treatment. While he has not heard any arguments since October, he is briefed on the cases and

the expectation was he would vote in them.

With speculation swirling that Rehnquist could announce his retirement at any time, court observers were caught by surprise Friday when Arberg said Rehnquist had accepted President Bush's invitation to administer the oath of office at the Jan. 20 inauguration. By tradition, the chief justice swears in the president, and Rehnquist has participated in every inauguration since becoming chief justice in 1986.

Some of the court's biggest cases so far this year were argued in October, when Rehnquist was on the bench. Among them: a challenge to the use of the death penalty for juvenile killers and a case that put in jeopardy the longtime rules for sentencing federal criminals. Rulings in both of those cases will come sometime after the court reconvenes in January.

A high-profile November case in which Rehnquist won't vote, unless he has to break a tie, deals with standards for on-the-job age discrimination lawsuits.

Supreme Court rulings

Death-sentence appeals rejected

The Supreme Court ruled Monday that a Florida death row inmate should not get a new trial even though his lawyer committed the man's guilt without his consent. The high court also rejected an appeal from Texas death row inmate Troy Kunkle, allowing his execution to proceed, even though one justice declared that Kunkle's sentence clearly violated the Constitution.

In the Florida case, the Supreme Court voted 8-0 to set aside a Florida Supreme Court decision in favor of Joe Elton Nixon. He was convicted in the 1994 murder of a woman he met at a Tallahassee mall.

Florida prosecutors say Nixon tied Jeanne Bickner, a 38-year-old state worker, to trees with jumper cables and set her on fire.

In a 5-2 decision last year, the Florida Supreme Court ordered a new trial after finding the lawyer did not effectively represent Nixon and that the defendant did not agree to the lawyer's strategy.

The Supreme Court declined to hear the appeal from Kunkle, who was convicted of murdering a robbery victim nearly 20 years ago. His attorneys had argued that Kunkle's drug and alcohol abuse history was not properly considered as mitigating evidence at trial.

Pollution cleanup lawsuits limited

The Supreme Court on Monday put restrictions on companies that want to voluntarily clean up their polluted land and sue former owners to share the costs.

The court ruled 7-2 against a company that in 1981 bought land in Texas that had been used for aircraft engine maintenance businesses and then used that court to recover some of the \$5 million it spent cleaning up pollution there.

The justices said the company improperly tried to use the Superfund law to sue because the government had not demanded that the cleanup be done.

However, the court left open the possibility that another part of the Superfund law could permit such lawsuits.

The law allows the Environmental Protection Agency to designate as "Superfund" sites areas that are highly polluted, and then officials can seek money from current and former owners for the cleanup costs.

Monday's case involved a broad category of land, many thousands of properties, that have abandoned toxic plants, landfills and mines but are not a priority for the EPA.

From The Associated Press

Bush honors GIs at holiday taping

BY KATA KERTESZ
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Christmas trees decorated with red bows, gold ornaments and white lights lined the hall at the National Building Museum for a holiday pageant attended President Bush and his wife, Laura.

The president spoke of the many servicemembers far from home during the holiday season. "These families and the troops they love can be certain that they have the support and gratitude of our nation."

Bush made his brief remarks Sunday night at a taping of the 23rd annual "Christmas in Washington" concert, which benefits the Children's National Medical Center in the nation's capital.

"We continue to seek the promise of peace on earth and goodwill toward men," Bush said.

Former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani was also in attendance. Giuliani is a close friend of Bernard Kerik, the former New York police commissioner who had been nominated to lead the Homeland Security Department. Questions about an immigration problem involving a family housekeeper led Kerik to withdraw his nomination Friday night.

The concert, hosted by Dr. Phil McGraw and his wife, Robin, will be broadcast Dec. 15 on the TNT cable network. Performers included country singer LeAnn Rimes, "American Idol" winner Ruben Studdard and pop singers Michael McDonald, Vanessa Williams, JoJo, the American Family Choir, the U.S. Army Band Herald Trumpets, Ian Fraser and the "Christmas in Washington" orchestra.



President Bush and first lady Laura Bush pose with elves, from left to right, Brook Allen and Marco and Milena Spencer Gallica, before the start of the taping of the annual Christmas in Washington concert on Sunday in Washington.

Jurors in Peterson trial ask to review evidence

BY BRIAN SKOLOFF
The Associated Press

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. — The jury deciding whether Scott Peterson should be executed or spend life in prison for killing his pregnant wife requested additional evidence Monday, including autopsy photos and aerial pictures of the bay where prosecutors said

Peterson dumped the body.

The evidence request came about two hours into the third day of deliberations. The jury requested 13 pieces of evidence, including the widely publicized photograph of Laci Peterson wearing red maternity pantsuit with her hands folded across her lap.

It was not immediately clear what the rest of the evidence was,

but almost all of it was presented by the prosecution at trial.

"Obviously some jurors are still trying to persuade other jurors," said trial observer Jim Hammer, a former San Francisco prosecutor. The fact that they're still working is good news for the prosecution because it means there's still the possibility of a death verdict.

Bush names new HHS chief

BY MARK SHERMAN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush chose Environmental Protection Agency chief Michael Leavitt on Monday to be secretary of Health and Human Services, filling one of the last two openings in his second-term Cabinet.

Bush praised Leavitt as a "fine executive" and "a man of great compassion. ... He's an ideal choice to lead one of the largest departments of the United States government."

Leavitt, Utah's governor before joining the Bush administration in late 2003, would succeed Tommy Thompson, who recently resigned.

Bush also has to name a new head of the Homeland Security Department to take the place of Bernard Kerik, who abruptly withdrew his nomination Friday night, citing immigration problems with a family housekeeper.

"He himself said he should

have brought it to our attention sooner," said White House spokeswoman Scott McClellan. "Commissioner Kerik pointed out that this was a mistake."

During Monday's announcement, Leavitt, 53, thanked Bush for showing confidence in him. "I feel a real sense of understandable regret" about leaving the EPA, he said.

He said the department of Health and Human Services plays a vital part in the lives of every American.

"I look forward ... to the implementation of the Medicare prescription drug program in 2006, medical liability reform and finding ways to reduce the cost of health care," Leavitt said. "I am persuaded that we can use technology and innovation to meet our most noble aspirations and not compromise our other values that we hold so dear."

The HHS has a budget of more than \$500 billion and 67,000 employees.

NASA's chief O'Keefe turns in resignation

WASHINGTON — Sean O'Keefe, who has spent three tumultuous years running the nation's space program, has resigned Monday. O'Keefe, 48, is a leading candidate to become the \$500,000-a-year chancellor of Louisiana State University's main campus in Baton Rouge. He will meet Thursday with a search committee seeking to fill the job, the panel's chairman, Joel Tobline, said Sunday.

Glen Mahone, chief NASA spokesman, said O'Keefe submitted a resignation letter on Monday to President Bush, who accepted it.

O'Keefe's tenure as administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration included the loss of the shuttle Columbia and its seven astronauts as well as budget battles and debates over the future of American space travel.

"Administrator O'Keefe has previously indicated to us that he is planning on leaving," said White House spokeswoman Scott McClellan.

The president believes he has done a great job over at NASA. "John Logsdon, director of George Washington University's space policy institute, and a member of the shuttle Columbia and the Accident Investigation Board, said the sense in the Washington space community, at least, was that O'Keefe had been eager to leave NASA."

From The Associated Press

Kerik's two extramarital affairs surface

BY RUSS BUETTNER
New York Daily News

NEW YORK — Former New York Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik conducted two extramarital affairs simultaneously, using a secret Battery Park City apartment for the passionate liaisons, the New York Daily News has learned.



Kerik

The first relationship, spanning nearly a decade, was with city Correction Officer Jeannette Pinero, the second was with famed

publishing titan Judith Regan. His affair with Regan, the stunningly attractive head of her own book publishing company, lasted for almost a year.

Dramatically, each woman learned of the existence of the other after Pinero discovered a love note left by Regan in the apartment.

The revelations about Kerik's private life come as repercussions over his suitability to be nominated for the post of secretary of homeland security. Kerik, 49, married with two children

Giuliani offers Bush an apology

WASHINGTON — Former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani, at a preplanned dinner with President Bush, offered apologies for the abortive nomination of close associate Bernard Kerik as homeland security secretary, a Giuliani spokeswoman said.

Kerik, who was Giuliani's police commissioner and more recently a business associate, asked Bush to withdraw his nomination late Friday after questions about an immigration problem involving a family housekeeper.

Giuliani spokeswoman Sunny Mindel said in New York that the White House dinner Sunday had been planned several weeks ago. "The president was very gracious," she said. "They remain good friends."

Earlier Sunday, Bush and Giuliani attended the taping of the annual "Christmas in Washington" concert, to be televised on the TNT cable network Dec. 15. White House spokeswoman Suzy DeFrancis said she could not comment on whether the two also had dinner.

— The Associated Press

from his current marriage, withdrew his name from consideration in a sudden and unexpected call to the White House on Friday night.

Kerik said that questions about the immigration status of his family's former nanny and failure to pay taxes prompted his decision to walk away from the job. But speculation has continued that there were deeper and more controversial reasons.

On Sunday, The News reported that a six-month investigation showed Kerik had accepted thousands of dollars in cash and gifts

without proper disclosure, and had ties to a construction company that investigators believe is linked to the mob.

Now revelations about his private life also cast a shadow on his suitability for one of the administration's highest-profile cabinet positions.

Asked about the affairs and the secret love nest Sunday, Joseph Tacopina, Kerik's attorney, said Kerik and Regan had denied the affair in the past.

Tacopina said Kerik's "friendship" with Pinero ended in 1996. But sources with knowledge of

both affairs painted a picture of passionate, and sometimes volatile, liaisons.

The tumultuous Regan-Kerik romance carried on for months, through the writing, publication and promotion of his autobiography, "The Lost Son: A Life in Pursuit of Justice," which Regan's company published.

The two worked out together most mornings at the New York Sports Club in Rockefeller Center and often dined at Fresco restaurant in midtown, according to sources.

Kerik visited Regan's Central Park West apartment almost daily and occasionally stayed the night, with his police detail camped outside.

They became so close that Kerik's two nieces stayed with Regan while the commissioner's sister was hospitalized, one source said.

Regan visited the Battery Park apartment several times, the source said, but apparently never knew that his actual residence at the time was an apartment on E. 79th Street.

Furnished corporate rentals similar to the unit Kerik used, according to the sources, are advertised at monthly rents from \$3,150 to \$6,200. Representatives of Milstein Properties, which owns the Liberty View, could not be reached Sunday.

After one encounter, Regan left a romantic note, which was later discovered by Pinero. The two later spoke on the phone.

"She wanted to know if Judith was still seeing him," the source said. "She told Regan about their affair and Regan told her she was shocked."

Many close to Kerik in the mid-1990s assumed that someday he would marry Pinero, a career correction officer described as spirited and attractive by friends, a close friend and a former high-ranking Correction Department source said.

The relationship continued after Kerik married Hala Matti, a hygienist in his dentist's office whom he met in mid-1996 and wed in November 1998, according to multiple sources close to Pinero and Kerik.

Kerik's affair with Pinero is at the center of two lawsuits against the city, both brought by correction employees who claimed Kerik retaliated after they crossed her. The city settled one last year for \$250,000. The News reported at the time.

The second suit, in which Pinero and Kerik were deposed last week, was filed by former Deputy Warden Eric DeRavin III, who claims Kerik quashed his promotion after he reprimanded Pinero. The city demanded a gag order on both depositions.

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Melissa Hedden holds a sign outside the Ohio Statehouse in Columbus during a rally earlier this month to draw attention to controversial election results that gave President Bush a slim victory in the state.

Activist groups challenge election results in Ohio

BY JOHN MCCARTHY

The Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Dissident groups asked the Ohio Supreme Court on Monday to review the outcome of the state's presidential race, hours before the Ohio delegation to the Electoral College was to cast ballots for president and vice president.

The groups question whether President Bush won the key swing state by 119,000 votes, guaranteeing his victory over Democrat Sen. John Kerry.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson and attorney Cliff Arnebeck of the Massachusetts-based Alliance for Democracy accused President Bush's campaign of "high-tech vote stealing."

Jackson said the challengers noticed Bush generally received more votes in counties that use op-

tical-scan voting machines and questioned whether the machines were calibrated to record votes for Bush.

The dissidents claim there were disparities in vote totals for Democrats, too few voting machines in Democrat-leaning precincts, organized campaigns directing voters to the wrong polling place and confusion over the counting of provisional ballots by voters whose names did not appear in the records at polling places.

If the court decides to hear the challenge, it can declare a new winner or throw out the results. The challengers also planned to ask the court to stop the Electoral College from counting the vote until their case can be decided.

Protesters had been expected to demonstrate outside the Capitol as Electoral College delegates

voted in the Ohio Senate chamber, but none were present as the vote began at midday.

Congressional Democrats sent a letter to Republican Gov. Bob Taft on Monday, asking him to delay the Electoral College vote or at least consider the results unofficial until the disputes are resolved.

Taft spokesman Orest Holubec said the governor would not postpone the vote or treat it as provisional.

"The vote is required to move forward by law, and it will move forward," Holubec said. "The vote has been certified by the secretary of state, and all of the valid provisions have been counted."

Kerry issued a statement last week saying reported voting problems should be investigated to ensure there are no doubts in future elections. His campaign does not dispute that Bush won the election, but supports the recounts.

potential victims lining up — even paying — to be injected with who-knows-what.

"Imagine if they hadn't been able to track her down, and they had no idea, and somebody had just come onto a college campus injecting people with something," said Dr. Michael Osterholm, a bioterrorism expert with the National Center for Food Protection and Defense at the University of Minnesota.

Osterholm said it's not realistic to expect patients to challenge the credentials of every nurse who administers a flu shot — but he said the school should have. "I think this really is at the center of the



Torgerson

discussion about what does it mean to recognize and report suspicious behavior," he said.

On Dec. 2, a staffer confronted Torgerson, asking who she was and who her supervisor was, according to Augsburg security director John Pack.

Pack said he and another security worker headed toward the commons to investigate. "At that point I wasn't thinking whether or not it was malicious or a mixup," Pack said. "I was thinking about the scope — I wondered how many people received shots."

Torgerson, of suburban Albertville, had left the campus promising the staffer she would provide the name of a supervisor, Pack said. But the security director said he never did, further raising suspicions.

Torgerson gave a different account Sunday, saying she did speak briefly to an administrator named Diane, but that she wasn't challenged. She said she left after the noon hour, as she

80-year-old man survives more than 18 hours in ocean

BY ADRIAN SAINZ

The Associated Press

MIAMI — By the time spear fisherman Ignacio Siberio realized his boat had drifted away in the chilly waters off the Florida Keys, it was too late to signal for help.

Instead, the 80-year-old who dives nearly every weekend called on his instincts, mustering all his mental and physical strength to move his legs underwater to prevent hypothermia.

As night fell, the temperature dropped to around 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Winds picked up from the north, churning the seas and tossing Siberio around as he clung to a buoy.

"You have to concentrate mentally in an extraordinary way so that you don't get to the point that the cold, the danger and the fact you are helpless make you quit," Siberio said. "When you quit, it's over."

Siberio, a lawyer who immigrated to the United States from Cuba, had gone to one of his favorite spear fishing spots off Taverna on Saturday morning. By about 2:30 p.m. he noticed the boat was no longer anchored.

He furiously swam after the boat for about three miles before giving up, grabbing a buoy to a lobster trap and watching his boat drift away in roughly 300 feet of deep water.

Siberio had to apply all he knew just to live, and spent more than 18 hours holding on to the buoy in the cold, rough ocean before he was found by a rescue Sunday, ending an exhaustive search in the Atlantic.

Siberio's great nephew, Carols Lopez, was on a friend's boat when they spotted the elderly man swimming to shore early Sunday.

"I'm feeling OK, but I got back home pretty beaten up, because I was all night and all day in one spot without moving," Siberio said in a telephone interview.

He insists he survived with the help of a wetsuit and instincts developed from more than 60 years of free diving and spear fishing. He did not require hospitalization, but was recovering at his weekend home in Tavernier.

Coast Guard Petty Officer John Zarr was on duty during the two-day search for Siberio.

"That's pretty amazing. He's got to be in excellent physical condition," Zarr said Sunday.

The day he went missing, Siberio's wife called Lopez to ask if they were together. Lopez realized there may be trouble and called the Coast Guard, which initiated a search.

Siberio's family grew even more worried Sunday morning, when the Coast Guard found his boat about 23 miles east of Elliott Key — roughly more than 40 miles from where Siberio began diving Saturday.

At around 2 a.m., the Coast Guard stopped its search. But Siberio didn't stop fighting. And, sometime in the night, Siberio kicked something "large and hard, a large animal."

"I don't know what it was. I was more worried about making it through the night," Siberio said.

He battled until after daylight, when he began swimming to shore.

Lopez marveled at the strength of the great uncle, and said medical personnel were concerned when they checked Siberio's heart rate after his rescue.

"The paramedic said, 'Your heartbeat is slow.' He answered, 'That's my normal heart rate,' Lopez said.

Winds wreak havoc

ST. PAUL, Minn. — High winds on Sunday toppled a 25-foot Christmas tree in the front yard of the Minnesota governor's mansion, uprooted others and knocked down power lines in that state and Iowa.

Heavy sustained winds and gusts of up to 65 mph led the National Weather Service to issue wind warnings or advisories for much of both states.

Reporter dead at 49

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Gary Webb, a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter, who wrote a controversial series of stories linking the CIA to crack cocaine trafficking in Los Angeles, was dead at age 49.

Webb was found Friday at his home in Sacramento County dead of an apparent suicide. Officials called authorities after discovering a note posted on his front door that read, "Please do not call. Call 911 and ask for an ambulance."

From The Associated Press

Flu-shot scare illustrates level of U.S. terror fears

BY JOSHUA FREED

The Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The woman offering flu shots for \$20 in the commons area at Augsburg college seemed plausible enough — green scrubs, white lab coat, stethoscope — that some three dozen people willingly paid their money, rolled up their sleeves and let her plunge the needle in.

But no one had scheduled a flu clinic. No one knew who the woman was. And no one could be sure what was in those syringes.

She turned out to be 33-year-old Michelle Torgerson, a freelance nurse who claims she was selling leftover vaccine to raise money for a fund-raiser at her daughter's school. And those shots were certainly nothing sinister, if not just plain old flu shots, lab tests have found.

But in an age when bioterrorism experts worry about sophisticated attacks, the case shows how anyone with a syringe and a reasonable looking get-up can have

discussion about what does it mean to recognize and report suspicious behavior," he said.

On Dec. 2, a staffer confronted Torgerson, asking who she was and who her supervisor was, according to Augsburg security director John Pack.

Pack said he and another security worker headed toward the commons to investigate. "At that point I wasn't thinking whether or not it was malicious or a mixup," Pack said. "I was thinking about the scope — I wondered how many people received shots."

Torgerson, of suburban Albertville, had left the campus promising the staffer she would provide the name of a supervisor, Pack said. But the security director said he never did, further raising suspicions.

Torgerson gave a different account Sunday, saying she did speak briefly to an administrator named Diane, but that she wasn't challenged. She said she left after the noon hour, as she

had planned, and did not "abruptly" leave, as officials have said.

Pack called police, and then set about trying to find out how many people had been injected. He sent an email alert to everyone on campus, and printed red flyers asking anyone who had gotten the shots to come forward. Teachers read the alert in class the next day.

Police arrested Torgerson the day after the injections were discovered, near her ex-husband's home in Belgrade, 90 miles away from the college.

Torgerson, a licensed practical nurse who had given immunizations as part of a legitimate clinic at Augsburg last month, insisted Sunday she did not "sting" wrong. She said she believed she had permission from an Augsburg administrator in charge of the student center to give the flu shots on her most recent visits to the school.

Torgerson has not been charged.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

STARS AND STRIPES WEB SITE: WWW.STRIPES.COM

OPINION

When holiday cheer meets harsh reality

BY KEVIN COWHERD

The Baltimore Sun

It's nice to see we're still being bombarded with the usual mixed messages this holiday season.

Where's your holiday spirit? everyone asks. Enjoy the season for once! Don't let the stress get to you! Then you turn on the 6 o'clock news and they're talking about dry Christmas trees torching the house and outdoor lights on overburdened extension cords electrocuting the family pet and hot new toys the kids could choke on.

Reach out to loved ones this holiday season! everyone says.

Then you pick up a newspaper and it's filled with headlines like: "How to sit down to dinner with people you can't stand" and "Surviving the holidays with your dysfunctional in-laws" and "Sure, you mother's a monster! But make the best of this Christmas!"

In the stores, crammed with stressed-out shoppers plunging into five-figure credit-card debt, the piped-in music assures: It's the most wonderful time of the year! But the morning talk shows are all about how to cope with depression, or seasonal affective disorder, or social anxiety triggered by the coming round of holiday partying, or a drinking problem.

"Good food with good friends — that's what the season's all about!" screams the cover of every glossy entertaining magazine you pick up. But now, according to news reports, undercooked turkeys and salmonella poisoning are wiping out entire families, cholesterol levels are higher than the Dow Jones Industrial Average, and we've turned into a nation of big fat pigs.

On one of the cable news networks the

other day, the anchor began a "To Your Health" segment with this: "Most people gain around seven pounds during the holiday season — did you know that?"

Did we know that? How could we not know that? We've been hearing about how fat we're getting for 20 years now.

When the nutritionists are finished with all their gloom-and-doom pronouncements, the fitness experts finish the job of bringing us down. Look, they say, celebrate all you want. But find a way to burn those calories, or you'll blow up like a blimp and eventually keel over and all the family and friends you left behind will hate you forever.

Go for a walk, they say. Hit the gym. But who can talk the gym when there's a two-inch layer of ice on the car windshield and the Weather Channel's calling for sleet and the Old Farmer's Almanac is calling for an end-of-the-world snowstorm? If I die in a snowstorm, I want to die in my own house, not in a spinning class surrounded by 16 sweaty people in red uniforms.

Here's another message you can't escape this time of year: Remember all the wonderful people you work with.

Great. Then you show up at work one morning and the overly chipper woman who sits in the next cubicle chirps: "Let's do an office Secret Santa this year! Oh, c'mon, it'll be fun!"

No, it won't. Let's face it: Is there anything that induces more stress during the holidays than Secret Santa? Pull a name out of a hat and buy a present for someone you barely know.

Who thought this was a terrific concept? Spend too little, and you look like a cheap-sleazebag. Spend too much, and it looks like you're showing off.



Even if you get the monetary amount right, you might end up giving a gift that offends a colleague. For instance, perhaps you remember that the person you're giving a gift to is a big dog lover. So you go out and buy a nice, I don't know, dog collar with little jingle bells or something. On the big day in which all the Secret Santas are revealed, that person opens your gift and stares uncomprehendingly at it for several seconds.

Then she blurts: "My Rexie died last week," and flees the room in tears.

Well, thank you very much. You just made the work environment a lot more pleasant.

Oh, well. At least there can be no arguing with the most venerable of all seasonal messages: Christmas is all about the kids.

This is why you show up an hour early at your child's school for her holiday recital... So you stake out your position 10 feet from the stage — elbows wide, feet planted, shoulders thrust back like an NBA center boxing out the other team's big man.

You wave at your child and smile and hold the camcorder steady for 90 minutes as you feed the first twinges of carpal tunnel syndrome in your wrists. Unless that's the holiday spirit you're feeling. Sometimes it's hard to tell one from the other.

No kidding: Blue States wait, Red States procreate

For a country in which the Red States control the politics, the popular culture sure seems Blue. And not a cool blue. Instead, it's a hot and sexy blue — call it Viagra blue. And yet

for all the sex that everyone seems to be enjoying, not many children are being born.

Let's start with some recent movies. The sequel to "Bridget Jones's Diary" begins with the title character exulting that she has begun with her current boyfriend for "six weeks, four days, seven hours and 71 ecstatic phases."

Speaking of the quantification of carnality: "Kinsey," the story of the famous erotic researcher, declares, as its tagline, "Let's talk about sex."

In addition, two films starring Jude Law, "Alfie" and "Closer," feature single, childless uddies in a roundelay of sexual couplings.

And for readers, the new sex-seller is Tom Wolfe's "I Am Charlotte Simmons," the ultimate dirty-old-man book.

OK, those are movies and books, and most adults don't go to movies or read books. But they all watch TV, where the new queens of the home entertainment system are "Desperate Housewives," and the most important males on that show are boy-toys. And yet older fellas are not forgotten on the tube; one might get the impression, from watching commercials, that the U.S. economy is sustained by sales of Viagra, as well as Levitra and Cialis.

Interestingly, when these aphrodisiacs

are pitched to would-be "wild things," no reference is made to anything so old-fashioned as a husband or wife. Instead, the spots are completely neutral, legally and sexually, as they urge "partners" to get it on. And soon, no doubt, there will be a patch for women who wish to patch up their sex lives.

It's a free country, of course. Indeed, in terms of sex, it's getting freer. But, in contrast, sexual freedom last if the exponents of lifestyle liberation don't reproduce themselves? The nation's birthrate has decreased by half since the peak of the baby boom. The big ethnic families that once had six kids might now have three. But in places where the Sex Boom is still peaking, "families," such as they are, are typically childless. And in terms of future politics, three outvotes zero.

In past societies, rampant sexuality led to sterility, as a result of venereal disease. In

our time, promiscuous sex has survived both herpes and AIDS, and yet for millions, fertility has not survived promiscuous sexuality. Many of the most educated and affluent are, in effect, voluntarily sterile. Their bodies might have remained virus-free, but their values have changed permanently.

The idea that some would channel their sexual energy into pursuits other than procreation has frequently been associated with homosexuality. That is, gays and lesbians presumably have more energy, as it were, to throw into art, literature, or education. From royal salons to avant-garde garrets to abbeys and rectories, those with no reproductive outlet sublimated their passions into painting, writing or teaching.

But now, in a sense, everyone — straight as well as gay — is an artist. A performance artist, that is, with his or her own sexuality.

As any reader of Cosmopolitan magazine quickly learns, some women are avidly "keeping score," just like Bridget. And since none want the game to end just because of age, the market for sex aids, from pills to plastic surgery, will never end.

Except that it might end, as the children of the children-oriented fill up the vacuum left by the childless. To be sure, some kids born into even the reddest states turn out to be "blue" spontaneously, becoming Midnight Cowboys. But if demographic destiny keeps grinding on, blue-state bohemians are destined to shrink. And so the red states will grow larger, culturally as well as politically.

So the randy, Bridget-y culture of the early 21st century will perhaps yield to a new way of life — in which a greater emphasis on fertility, as opposed to just sexuality, becomes the new primal value.

James Pinkerton is a Newsday columnist.

James Pinkerton



Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



IN THE WORLD

Israel to leave Palestinian towns for vote

Defense minister says troops plan 72-hour retreat for Jan. 9 election

BY GAVIN RABINOWITZ

The Associated Press

HERZLIYA, Israel — Israel will withdraw its troops from Palestinian towns for 72 hours during next month's Palestinian presidential election, Israel's defense minister said Monday, signaling that a deadly weekend attack on an Israeli army post is not derailing fledgling peace efforts.

The defense minister, Shaul Mofaz, also said it is in Israel's interest to coordinate next year's planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip with the Palestinians — a marked departure from Israel's initial insistence to act unilaterally.

The Islamic militant group Hamas and gunmen with ties to the ruling Fatah movement claimed responsibility for Sunday's attack on an army outpost on the Gaza-Egypt border. The militants detonated 1.5 tons of explosives, killing five soldiers and wounding five in what they dubbed "Operation Angry Volcano."

Hamas said it had dug an 800-meter-long tunnel over four months to reach the outpost.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said Monday that the new Palestinian leadership is not doing enough to restrain militants.

"By now, we don't see any change," Sharon said of Palestinian efforts. The comments marked the first time since Yasser Arafat's death last month that Sharon criticized Arafat's moderate successor, Mahmoud Abbas, though he did not mention Abbas by name.

Later Monday, Israel's military chief, Lt. Gen. Moshe Yaalon, said that militants are trying to undermine the new Palestinian leadership, but hinted that Israel's patience is growing thin.

"We have no choice but to act



The father of Israeli army Sgt. Tarek Al-Zaidina, center, weeps Monday during his son's funeral in Rahat, Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said Monday that the new Palestinian leadership is not doing enough to restrain militants, such as the ones who killed Al-Zaidina and four other Israeli soldiers in an explosion Sunday.

ourselves," Yaalon said at a briefing in the Gaza Strip. "That is what we are doing and that is what we will do unless someone

on the other side takes responsibility and starts to deal themselves with the terror groups."

Israel's initial response to the

outpost attack was relatively muted. Helicopters fired five missiles at what the military said were weapons workshops in Gaza City, causing no injuries.

The outpost attack was seen as a challenge to Abbas, who has been trying to persuade militants to halt attacks on Israelis ahead of presidential elections Jan. 9. Abbas has criticized the armed Palestinian uprising and enjoys the support of the international community.

Mofaz told an academic conference in the Tel Aviv suburb of Herzliya on Monday that Israeli troops would withdraw from Palestinian towns a day before the vote, and stay out for 72 hours.

Israel has said it would do its utmost to facilitate the vote, but the defense minister's comments were the most detailed yet on troop redeployment.

Palestinian Cabinet minister Saeb Erekat said Israeli troops should leave immediately to allow candidates to campaign. He also said Israel should lift travel bans it imposed on Palestinians after the September 2000 outbreak of fighting.

Ukraine reopens inquiry on poisoning

The Associated Press

KIEV, Ukraine — Lawmakers in Ukraine's parliament reopened their investigation Monday into opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko's illness after doctors in Austria determined he had suffered dioxin poisoning.

The parliamentary commission decision followed a similar move by the country's prosecutor general on Sunday.

The commission will be led by Volodymyr Sivkovych, a lawmaker who has supported Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, Yushchenko's opponent in the Dec. 26 runoff for the presidency.

"The results of the most recent expertise in Vienna are giving us grounds to renew our work," Sivkovych said. "However, we are not convinced that deliberate poisoning can be proved."

The investigation led by Sivkovych investigated the case in October and decided that Yushchenko had suffered a combination of a viral infection and several other diseases.

Sivkovych urged Yushchenko to immediately hand over results of the tests conducted by doctors in Austria to prosecutors and the parliamentary committee.



Yushchenko



Spain's Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, right, stands for photographers Monday at the start of his appearance before a commission investigating the March 11 train bombings in Madrid, Spain.

Premier denies party sought to gain from Madrid bombings

BY DANIEL WOOLLS

The Associated Press

MADRID, Spain — Spain's prime minister, heckled Monday by opposition lawmakers, angrily denied his Socialist party instigated anti-government rallies on the eve of a general election to reap political benefit from the Madrid train bombings.

Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero also accused former Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar of misleading Spaniards by blaming Basque militants for the bombings, even after evidence of an Islamic link emerged and accumulated.

Thousands of demonstrators — spreading the word by cell phone text message — convened protest rallies outside then-ruling Popular Party offices in Madrid and other cities on March 13, two days after the bombings that killed 191 people. They accused Aznar's pro-U.S. government of making Spain a target for al-Qaida by endorsing the Iraq invasion — and the next day, the opposition Socialists won the election.

Under Spanish law, political rallies are banned the day before an election.

"We did not know about, plan, participate in, instigate or support the demonstrations on March 13," Zapatero said at a raucous session of a parliamentary commission probing the bombings.

Zapatero is the first sitting Spanish prime minister to testify before a parliamentary commission of inquiry, where he again condemned the war in Iraq, and said his predecessor had increased the risk of an Islamic terror attack here by supporting it.

The 16-member panel investigating the bombings began its work in July and has heard from more than 50 former police and government officials on how the government handled the attacks and what warnings it had that Spain might be a target for Muslim militants.

The commission is scheduled to conclude with testimony later this week from a representative of an association of March 11 victims, then write a final report.

Chile's Pinochet indicted

The Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile — Gen. Augusto Pinochet was indicted Monday for the kidnapping of nine dissidents and the killing of one of them during his 1973-90 regime, and the former dictator was placed under house arrest.

Judge Juan Guzman made the announcement nearly three months after questioning the 89-year-old former ruler and having him examined by doctors to determine whether he can stand trial.

Guzman said he made the decision to try Pinochet after carefully reviewing an interview Pinochet gave to a Spanish language television station in Miami.

He said he is convinced Pinochet is healthy enough to stand trial.

The trial of Pinochet is part of Guzman's investigation of the so-called "Operation Condor," a joint plan by the dictatorships that ruled several South American nations in the 1970s and '80s to suppress dissidence.

Pinochet's lawyers are expected to appeal Guzman's decision to the Supreme Court.

It's the second time Pinochet faces trial for the abuses during his long reign. In 2001, the Supreme Court ruled he was physically and mentally unfit to stand trial — a condition Pinochet's lawyers argue not only still exists but has worsened.

EU nears 'yes,' details on Turkey membership talks

BY ROBERT WIELAARD
The Associated Press

BRUSSELS, Belgium — The European Union edged closer Monday to giving Turkey the green light on membership talks, but jitters over bringing the relatively poor Muslim nation into the fold prevented decision on a starting date.

The final decision is up to EU leaders meeting in Brussels on Thursday and Friday, after the EU foreign ministers failed Monday to set a start date and duration for talks.

French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier, whose country is skeptical of Turkey joining the bloc, said "negotiations will be long, open-ended and difficult" and stressed that membership was not yet a done deal.

Officials were drafting a summit declaration Monday to open the doors to Turkey.

The draft text, obtained by The Associated Press, hails Turkey for having made "decisive progress" in economic and political reforms. Leaders also express confidence in Turkey's sustained reforms, "and vow to monitor Ankara's commitment to 'funda-

mental freedoms and to full respect of human rights, (especially) the zero-tolerance policy relating to torture and ill-treatment of prisoners."

Of particular concern to the EU is that the Turkish parliament approve laws on criminal procedures and the judicial police.

Four other laws, including one enacting a new penal code, have been adopted by the legislature, but must yet take legal effect.

The EU foreign ministers debated possible dates for talks to start, and conditions to attach to them to assuage fears in Western Europe of bringing Turkey into the bloc.

Opposition to Turkey's joining has come from Austria, Slovakia, Denmark and France.

France wants the talks to begin in late 2005 or 2006.

If Turkey joins, its companies will face stiff and unrestricted competition from EU rivals. Turkey has a weak economy with a per capita income of about average.

Turkey is also at odds with other EU nations over Cyprus, divided into a Greek Cypriot south and a Turkish-controlled north since Turkey invaded in 1974.

Romania's election

BUCHAREST, Romania — Reformist opposition candidate Traian Basescu won Romania's presidential runoff election Monday — a blow to the successors of the once-powerful communist who ruled for most of the period since the 1989 revolution.

His opponent, Prime Minister Adrian Nastase, conceded defeat after results showed Basescu had won 51.23 percent of Sunday's vote, compared with Nastase's 48.77 percent. The results were based on 98.76 percent of the ballots counted.

In a victory speech, Basescu pledged to prepare Romania to join the European Union by 2007. He said he would strengthen ties with the United States and Britain to guarantee Romania's security, while also seeking good relations with Russia and other former Soviet states.

IRA disarmament

DUBLIN, Ireland — Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams on Monday insisted the IRA would not allow photographs of its disarmament as the British and Irish governments tried to clear the way for a new Northern Ireland peace pact.

"The photographs are dead and gone and buried," said Adams, emerging from Prime Minister Tony Blair's office in London. "I do not think there is any possibility of resurrecting that issue."

The Irish Republican Army said last week it was willing to scrap its remaining weapons stockpiles, but only if Britain, Ireland and the north's Protestant leaders dropped demands for the process to be photographed.

Elephants enjoy tapioca

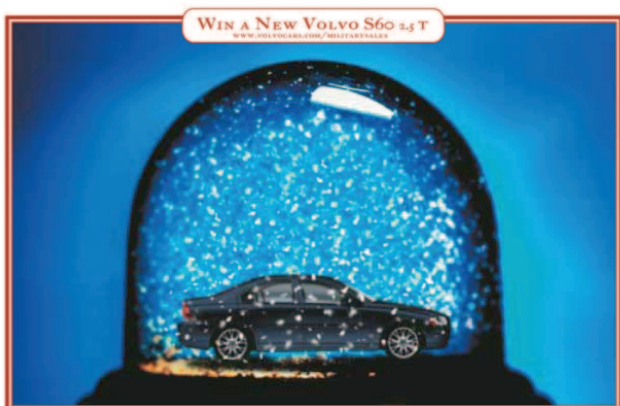
BANGKOK, Thailand — Wild elephants in Thailand stumbled upon a feast when they found a tapioca delivery truck with a flat tire, officials said Monday.

The driver, Somkuan Sirisat, said he had gone for help to repair the tire Sunday night — and when he returned, he found five or six elephants surrounding his truck and devouring its contents.

The elephants found their windfall in the Ta Taikab district of Chachoengsao province, 56 miles east of Bangkok.

The elephants left the scene after eating their fill.

From The Associated Press



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15 DECEMBER: HANAU COMMISSARY GERMANY, SIGONELLA COMMISSARY ITALY

17 DECEMBER: GIESSEN COMMISSARY GERMANY, MILDENHALL COMMISSARY GERMANY

18 DECEMBER: RAMSTEIN COMMISSARY GERMANY

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Missing bells found

WA SEATTLE—A handbell hobbyist in Texas helped crack the case of the stolen church chimes, leading police to a trio of young men suspected of pawnning about \$20,000 worth of the gleaming bronze instruments.

Six of eight cases of Schulerich handbells and Malmark hand chimes stolen from Alderwood Community Church in Lynnwood, Wash., were sold by mail shipments through eBay to buyers as far away as Pennsylvania for a combined \$4,129.

A 21-year-old Everett, Wash., man—a former church member—was arrested, and police expect to arrest other suspects.

The church didn't discover its collection of nearly 100 bells and chimes was missing until Labor Day weekend because its bell choir took a summer hiatus.

Reporter claims assault

NC BURLINGTON—A developer was charged with threatening and assaulting a newspaper reporter who wrote a story about a proposed private club in Burlington.

James Moffat, a reporter for the Times-News of Burlington, said Ernie Koury Jr., 50, confronted him before a meeting of the Burlington City Council. Koury allegedly grabbed Moffat by the throat and shirt collar, shook him and threatened to kill him if he wrote another article about the club like one Moffat had written earlier.

The story, written in November, quoted a planning and zoning commissioner who questioned what kind of business the club would be. Koury's attorney accused the commissioner that "nothing illegal" would take place.

Koury was charged with communicating threats and simple assault. The newspaper asked Moffat to file the charges.

High-tech licenses

MN ST. PAUL—Minnesota has begun issuing a first-of-its-kind driver's license designed to thwart counterfeiters—an issue that has taken on greater urgency since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

The licenses have a security feature in which a reflective image appears to float above and below the card when the license is tilted. The licenses will have a distinctively Minnesota flavor: The floating images will be of loons, an enduring symbol of the state.

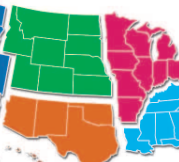
Minnesota is the first state to use the technology, developed by Maplewood-based IM Co. The technology has been around about a year and has only been used on Australian passports.

Surprise landing

TX FABENS—A small plane that had lost power briefly landed atop an 18-wheeler before crashing onto the highway, authorities said. The two people aboard the plane came out unscathed, and the truck driver never heard a thing.

"Nothing happened to the truck, except for a couple of small marks up top," said Trooper Licia Lina, a spokeswoman for the Texas Department of Public Safety.

The single-engine plane carry-



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

ing an El Paso couple fell off the trailer and landed upside down on Interstate 10 during the emergency landing 19 miles east of El Paso, Texas said.

FAA investigators were reviewing the incident.

Driving teacher fired

NH CONCORD—An uncertified high school driving instructor previously convicted of drunken driving was arrested after his vehicle ran off the road as he was headed to teach a driving class, officials said.

Arthur Desmeules, 66, faces several charges stemming from the Nov. 22 incident, including drunken driving. The Nashua School District fired him last week.

He had taught driving to students in the district for 35 years.

Not a hate crime

FL CLEARWATER—A white man accused of draping a noose around the shoulders of a black teenager was convicted of misdemeanor battery. The jury declined to return a felony verdict that would have labeled the offense a hate crime.

Circuit Judge Tim Peters, however, surprised the courtroom by sending Louis J. Giannola IV, 20, to jail pending his Jan. 10 sentencing. He had been free on bond, and a misdemeanor usually carries



Look out below

Mike Bishop rappels from the top of the McLennan County Courthouse in Waco, Texas, while changing some of the 1,200 bulbs that line the exterior.

only probation for a defendant with no prior record.

Giannola was accused of draping a noose around the neck of Dionte Hall, 15, in January at a Wendy's restaurant in Largo, west of Tampa. He claimed he did so because another youngster, whose father is black, bet him \$10 he wouldn't do it.

High salaries

CA OAKLAND—More than 800 people who work for the financially strapped city of Oakland made at least \$100,000 in the last fiscal year, according to records released following a court order obtained by a newspaper.

The total represents about 18 percent of the city's work force of about 4,500 from July 2003 through July 2004. About three-quarters of the employees were in the police and fire departments.

Oakland is facing a projected deficit of more than \$45 million over the next two years that threatens basic city services. The deficit is partly due to pay raises and improved benefits approved during the economic boom of the 1990s.

About two-thirds of the top earners had salaries set under \$100,000, but earned more due to extras, such as overtime. One police officer made \$177,311 during the period, although his base salary was \$73,188, according to the records.

Prescription savings

ME PORTLAND—A program that encourages city employees to enter prescription drugs from Canada is saving the city and its workers tens of thousands of dollars, city officials said. Savings through the Portland Meds program are on track to top \$100,000 during the current fiscal year, which ends June 30. The program was launched last July.

Deer-vehicle crashes up

IN FORT WAYNE—More than 14,000 deer-vehicle crashes were reported in the state last year, and the frequency of the crashes is increasing, says the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. Deer researcher Lance McNew says there were 20 percent more crashes last year than in 2000.

Crowded cemeteries

VT QUECHEE—When Lawrence Hudson Jr. dies, he expects to be buried in the plot his great-grandmother bought 80 years ago, near where his father, Lawrence Hudson Sr., was buried in June.

It helps that Hudson is following in his father's and grandfather's footsteps around the Hilltop Cemetery, caring for the same plots tended by the two previous Hudsons who served as sexton.

There's space for him in the family plot, Hudson said.

Others might not be as fortunate. Quechee's is among a number of cemeteries in Vermont and New Hampshire that have run out of room to grow.

The cost of adding land to existing cemeteries has risen greatly, just as year-round tourism, growth and the desire of some vacation home owners to be buried in the hills have increased demand.



Balloons that glow

Balloonists from the Southwest Smith Park.



Something is missing ... Nick Harberts of Worthington wins a heat race with his 2005 Arctic Cat Freecat during Winterfest in Luverne, Minn. From snowmobiling on alfalfa to strapping on cross-country skis with wheels, Minnesotans are finding ways of coping with a frustrating lack of snow.



Ride 'em Santa

Santa is lifted onto an old B-47 at the former Pittsburgh (N.Y.) Air Force Base by workers from the Plattsburgh Airbase Redevelopment Corp. Santa has ridden the bomber for 30 years.



tern Ohio Competition Club light the night sky during the annual Christmas Balloon Glow in Middletown, Ohio's



A cow moose gets a snout full of snow

Got something on your nose

while feeding in a field near West Yellowstone, Mont.



Swoosh!

Kane Lasky, of Boise, Idaho, skis down to the base of Bogus Basin Ski Resort's Deer Point lift on the first day of skiing at the resort outside of Boise.



Let there be light

Poughkeepsie, N.Y., on the start of Hanukkah.

Rabbi Yacov Borenstein, left, and local businessman Stephen Aronson light a torch on the menorah at the intersection of Main and Skating streets in

Man convicted of murder

NE GERING — A man who abducted, assaulted and killed a 15-year-old newspaper carrier in western Nebraska was convicted of first-degree murder.

Jeffrey Hessler, 26, was found guilty in the February 2003 death of Heather Guerrero, who was kidnapped blocks from her home. Her body was found the next day by two family members at an abandoned house about 12 miles away.

The prosecutor, Doug Warner, said a neighbor's report of hearing a scream and seconds later a speeding car were proof Guerrero was "surprised, overpowered and taken against her will."

Defense lawyer Jim Mowbray said Hessler "didn't mean for it to happen" and had not planned to kill Guerrero. Mowbray maintained that Hessler should have been charged with second-degree murder.

Steer escapes death

WI CALEDONIA — After four days on the lam, a wayward steer that had been spotted on front yards and near a golf course found its way back to its own barn and avoided a possible death penalty.

Police had standing orders to shoot the 700-pound animal because of the danger it could pose if it strayed into traffic on nearby state Highway 38.

Kelly Welter and her children joined the search with her 17-year-old nephew, who owns the animal and plans to show it at the Racine County Fair next year, after the steer broke through an electric fence and a stock gate.

Suspicious fires continue

DC WASHINGTON — A serial arsonist who authorities believe started more than 40 fires struck again, investigators said.

The latest fire, which broke out at 5 p.m. on the exterior of a house in Northeast Washington, is the 46th case in the region to come under the jurisdiction of the Arson Task Force.

"Investigators are pretty confident that this is part of our serial arsonists," said Kelly Long, task force spokeswoman and agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Long said investigators believe the latest fire is linked to the others based on general characteristics.

Decorations troubling

AZ SCOTTSDALE — The boo birds said Chris Birkett's Halloween display was too scary, and now he's in trouble with the law.

Birkett, who has hosted holiday displays at his home, was charged with disorderly conduct following an Oct. 30 police report over his Halloween display, police said.

Birkett's neighbor told police she has small children who were frightened and couldn't sleep because of the ghostly sounds.

Officers attested that they could hear the noise from the neighbor's home and submitted their report to prosecutors, police spokesman Sam Bailey said.

Another neighbor called police recently about Birkett's winter display. That neighbor complained about the noise from crews working to put up the display and traffic

and debris left by sightseers.

Police said Birkett faces a \$2,500 fine and six months in jail if convicted of disorderly conduct.

Landlord convicted

NY NEW YORK — A landlord was found guilty of hiring hit men to force two brothers of a rent-controlled apartment last year.

Juan Basagotia, 50, was accused of paying two tenants in the building \$2,500 to beat the brothers and attack them with a knife in March. He allegedly wanted to oust the victims from their three-bedroom, \$400-a-month apartment in the Elmhurst section of New York's Queens borough so he could raise the rent to \$1,500.

The brothers, William and David Lavery, suffered disfiguring injuries in the attack but survived.

Basagotia could face up to life in prison when sentenced in January. His lawyer, Stewart Orden, said his client hired the attackers to scare the brothers, not to hurt them, and that the plan spiraled out of control.

Hospital wristband safety

FL TAMPA — A hospital chain is taping over patients' LiveStrong wristbands because they are yellow — the same color as the "do not resuscitate" bands it puts on patients who do not want to be saved if their heart stops.

No mix-ups have been reported, but BayCare Health Systems officials do not want to take any chances.

The popular LiveStrong rubber bracelets are sold through the Lance Armstrong Foundation as part of the champion bicycle racer's efforts to raise money for cancer research.

Gun applications down

MO KANSAS CITY — Not as many Missourians as expected have applied to carry a concealed gun. Officials had expected as many as 60,000 applications in the first year, but county sheriffs have requested only 13,748 background checks through November. The permits became available in March.

Graffiti gets political

CA SAN FRANCISCO — San Francisco Board of Supervisors President Matt Gonzalez, who has thumbed his nose at the establishment before, let a graffiti artist spray paint his City Hall office walls with the bright orange message: "SMASH THE STATE."

There is irony. There is art appreciation. There are raised eyebrows.

Gonzalez, who has hosted monthly art installations in his office by unknown and known artists for the last four years, ordered up this graffiti for one of his last exhibits before he exits City Hall on Jan. 8. Gonzalez did not seek re-election.

The timing and placement of the artwork are interesting, seeing how City Hall is a registered historical landmark, and you need approval just to hang a bulletin board — and seeing how Mayor Gavin Newsom, Gonzalez's rival in the mayor's race last year, has been issuing strict edicts about the city's and public's responsibility to clean up graffiti vandalism.

Stories and photos from wire services

FACES



Released Curt Smith and Roland Orzabal of Tears for Fears perform in New York's Rockefeller Center on Sept. 25, as part of NBC's "Today" show. The band is best known for its 1980s hits "Shout" and "Everybody Wants to Rule the World."

Shouting match

Years after bitter split, Tears for Fears duo find a "Happy Ending" together

BY ROSS RAIHALA
Knight Ridder Newspapers

Curt Smith knew he was ready to leave Tears for Fears back in 1989, as the duo was finishing its third album, "The Seeds of Love."

"I made the decision before I started the tour," Smith said during a phone interview from his home in Los Angeles. "I left at the end of it. It was no fun anymore; it had become a tedious experience."

Fifteen years later, Smith has reunited with Tears for Fears co-founder Roland Orzabal for a new record — appropriately titled "Everybody Loves a Happy Ending" — and tour.

And for Smith, Tears for Fears is fun again. "Oh, phew, it's night and day, really," he said. "Making this record was an enjoyable process from start to finish, which is unheard of for us."

When Smith and Orzabal formed the group in the early '80s, they were drawn together by a mutual admiration for Arthur Janov's primal scream therapy. Their gloomy first album, 1983's "The Hurting," was a hit in their native England, despite the depressive nature of the lyrics reflected in song titles such as "Watch Me Bleed," "Suffer the Children" and "Mad World."

But by 1985's "Songs From the Big Chair," Smith and Orzabal had lightened up, sort of, and found a worldwide audience on the strength of the now-classic singles "Shout" and "Everybody Wants to Rule the World."

The newfound fame and fortune turned the sessions for "The Seeds of Love" into a grueling marathon that lasted more than two years. "I thought the production was great," said

Smith. "And there are a couple standout tracks. But there's also a lot of filler material and self-indulgent nonsense."

After Smith departed the group, Orzabal kept recording under the Tears for Fears moniker throughout the '90s, to diminishing commercial returns. The duo's only communication was through lawyers.

But in 1999, the pair made over dinner. "It wasn't because we were thinking of making a record; we just realized [not talking] was just silly," Smith said. "We had such a long history together, we started out just working on our friendship."

Over the next few years, the pair continued to talk, and eventually the conversation turned to music. They had already started recording together when a cover version of the duo's "Mad World," performed by singer/songwriter Gary Lucas, became a surprise hit in 2003 after featuring prominently in the cult film "Donnie Darko."

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the duo's comeback album picks up, sonically, where "The Seeds of Love" left off. It's a grand, sweeping record full of Beatles-esque turns and jazzy flourishes.

"There are definitely some ties between them," Smith said. "I think this is what 'The Seeds of Love' should have been. I think it's actually better."

As for the future, is Tears for Fears' new album title, "Everybody Loves a Happy Ending," an epitaph? Smith said the pair have tour plans through the summer and have continued to write new music.

"You know, we have a good working relationship now," Smith said.

"But whenever we've made plans in the past, we've never stuck to them. Who knows what will happen, but we're enjoying it now."

"We just realized [not talking] was just silly."

Curt Smith

Wyclef Jean launches Haiti effort

Wyclef Jean has launched a nonpolitical humanitarian effort to help rebuild his native Haiti.

Yele Haiti seeks to use music and community development as an outreach to the Caribbean country's youth. The organization plans to help rebuild schools in slum areas and hold a free concert in Haiti in the spring.

Jean launched Yele Haiti with a concert Thursday night. Among those on the arrivals line were Susan Sarandon, a member of a task force that is assisting the former Fugees rapper, and her partner, Tim Robbins.

"The objective of Yele Haiti is to restore pride and a reason to hope, and for the whole country to regain the deep spirit and strength that is part of our heritage," Jean says on the Yele Haiti Web site.

Jean's 1997 solo hit, "We Trying to Stay Alive," re-worked the Bee Gees disco classic into an anthem of Haitian slums.

Pepper: Earnhardt role had to be true

While portraying baseball great Roger Maris, actor Barry Pepper learned the importance of capturing the character. Anything short of authentic doesn't sit very well with fans.

So when it came to portraying Dale Earnhardt, perhaps the most revered man in NASCAR history, Pepper knew

he had his work cut out for him.

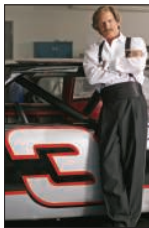
"[Earnhardt] is an American legend, and that is always thin ice," Pepper said. "And the similarities between Earnhardt and Maris... they had extraordinary fan bases."

You knew you were dealing with a very fervent opinion of who the man was, so if you strayed too far from that or didn't do your homework, you were going to hear about it."

Pepper, nominated for an Emmy for his portrayal of Maris in the TV movie "61," plays Earnhardt from ages 16 to 49 in the ESPN biopic "3," directed by Russell Mulcahy.

When he arrived in North Carolina, where filming took place in the Charlotte area and Earnhardt's hometown of Kannapolis, fans made it clear they wanted Pepper to get it right.

The movie doesn't show the 2001 crash that killed Earnhardt on the final lap of the Daytona 500 — Pepper said it would have been inappropriate. And the film was made



Barry Pepper as NASCAR driver Dale Earnhardt

without the cooperation of Earnhardt's widow, Teresa, who had early discussions with the network but didn't reach an agreement.

Poker players go for beauty

Pamela Anderson wins with a full house.

In an online survey conducted by EmpirePoker.com, 42 percent of the Web site's VIPs selected model-actress Anderson as the celebrity they would most like to play against.

"Our players clearly think Pamela Anderson isn't too bright or maybe they just want to oggle her," said Ron Burke, EmpirePoker.com's marketing manager.

Dennis Rodman was a distant second with 24 percent. James Woods shuffled 13 percent. Dave Navarro was picked by 10 percent, skateboarder Tony Hawk and Matt Damon each drew 3 percent. Donald Trump was selected by 2 percent and 1 percent said Ben Affleck.

Hank Azaria, Michael Jan Black, Ron Artest, Clay Aiken and Teri Hatcher also picked up votes.

When asked which celebrity would be most likely to cheat at poker, 37 percent of those surveyed chose Affleck.

Stories and photos from wire services



Anderson

Horoscope

Looking around, you could easily get the impression that you're living in a cartoon world where rhymes hardly feel out of place and people seem more like Dr. Seuss characters than flesh-and-blood humans. The moon enters friendly Aquarius, infusing us with eccentric creativity and the need to share it. Find your inner wackiness.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (December 14). Your strong will creates success and happiness this year. You're able to knock down the barrier erected between you and what you want. Surround yourself with mentors and friends, especially wise ones, as you enter the new year. Creative partners turn into love partners in February, and love partners work together creatively. You, too. Your lucky numbers are: 10, 45, 23, 19 and 31.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You're not striving to merely get ahead of the ball; you want to sink it in the goal and win the whole game! Don't be surprised if everyone around you is thinking much smaller. Give yourself and your colleagues a pep talk.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). It's not fair. While some try hard to capture the attention of an uncaring world, you simply show up, and everyone responds. To claim you've got charisma would be an understatement. You're electro-luminous-ent!

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Others are so friendly and helpful, you'll wonder if they're up to something. No, you're just easy to be nice to. Continue to tip big and bring your winning personality to all you encounter. A new love is among your admiring public.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). When you dare to speak up, you surprise yourself! More than another opinion from the peanut gallery, you're a self-styled revolutionary force. So express in the moment. Don't let your ideas swim in the sea of afterthoughts.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You'll feel like the parent, especially when

people who are supposed to be your superiors act like Angst-ridden, misunderstood teens. When they finally ask for your input, you provide an earnest stream of useful feedback.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You're centered, but your team is a mess. It falls on you to pull everyone together, or the group could polarize just when unity is what's required. Reiterate the bottom line, and stress the goal you all have in common.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Clear up misunderstandings so you can build a more solid support system. You're given an uncensored forum to air your grievances, but that doesn't mean you should lose your signature diplomacy. Being nice is still effective.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). The only difference between lettuce and garbage is timing. Your own fine timing could land you a piece of the action in a business venture, a killer deal on a big-ticket item, or a date for Saturday night.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You're determined to be proactive instead of reactive. Be sure to reinforce that to the quantum computer that lives in your brain. Giving yourself simple tasks to accomplish is your key to success.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). It feels like your life is in the blender. While you're handling the blur around you, you don't have time to put up with anyone's antics. Draw boundaries, or your risk is being inundated with the relationship equivalent of useless junk.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). It looks like things are going your way, so back off, and trust the process. Otherwise, your expectations could get so high that your nervous system doesn't know how to react. As the teens say, "Be more chill."

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Once again, you're floating in a sea of emotions, but this time, it's in more of a yacht than a lifeboat. It's your reward for investing your feelings in a situation that actually deserves your passionate contribution.

Creators Syndicate

Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes

Jump Start

Zits

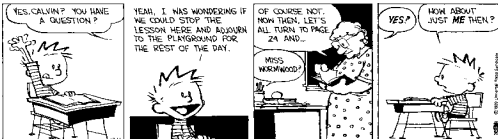
Cathy

Hi and Lois

Beetle Bailey

Red and Rover

Better or Worse



Peanuts



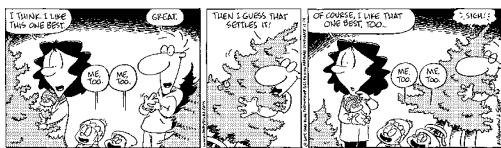
Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



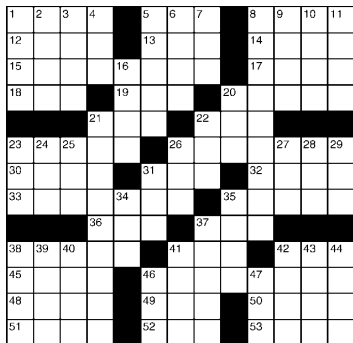
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Cry like a banshee
- 5 "Do —" favor
- 8 Took off
- 12 Wile E.'s supplier
- 13 Listening device
- 14 Matador's foe
- 15 Hickory variety
- 17 Family member
- 18 Nerd-pack occupant
- 19 B&B
- 20 Correspond
- 21 Adipose tissue
- 22 "Song of the South" song start
- 23 Buckets
- 26 Harlemque genre
- 30 Met melody
- 31 Overly
- 32 Stationer's unit
- 33 Evaluated
- 35 Excited states
- 36 Pack quantity
- 37 Whatever number
- 38 Large amounts
- 41 Ostri's kin
- 42 Poke
- 45 Notion
- 46 Acceleration contest
- 48 Complaint
- 49 Ph. bk. info
- 50 "Metamorphoses" poet
- 51 Get of image
- 52 Slubdom one
- 53 Bankrolls

Down

- 1 Hornet's cousin
- 2 Rue the run
- 3 Somalian supermodel
- 4 "The Amazing Race" episode
- 5 Intended
- 6 Have coming
- 7 Deluge refuge
- 8 Pre-wedding blowout
- 9 Decant
- 10 Sea filer
- 11 Love not wisely but too well
- 16 Prejudice
- 20 Pick a target
- 21 Arizona city
- 22 Menagerie
- 23 Mammandle
- 24 Exist
- 25 Midafternoon, on a sundial
- 26 Staff
- 27 Born
- 28 Cornfield comment
- 29 Type squares
- 31 John Ritter's dad
- 34 Possessive pronoun
- 35 All warm and cozy
- 37 Get together
- 38 BBQ entree
- 39 Syllables after 22-Across
- 40 Sense
- 41 Aphrodite's kid
- 42 Hurt hit
- 43 Alkali neutralizer
- 44 Hotel accommodations
- 46 Modern-day evidence
- 47 Squabbie

Answer to Previous Puzzle



12-14

CRYPTOQUIP

DASV U JFGPSWIUOL AUR
XKVKRASC DBWL, CB NBF
WSOLBV AS GKHAZ SVIBN

U PKZ BX JUHSW?
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: YOU SAID THAT YOU INVENTED BALLOONS, BUT I HAVE TO BELIEVE YOU'RE FULL OF HOT AIR.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: V equals N

SCOREBOARD

AFN® & Radio

Tuesday
AFN-Sports, 1:30 a.m. — Bowling: PBA Earl Anthony Medford Classic (dtd).

AFN-Sports and AFN-Radio, 11 a.m. — NFL: Kansas City at Tennessee.

AFN-Sports, 3 a.m. — NFL: Orlando at Philadelphia.

AFN-Sports, 9 a.m. — College basketball: Wake Forest at Temple (dtd).

AFN-Sports, 11 a.m. — NFL: Kansas City at Tennessee (dtd).

AFN-Sports, noon — NBA: Dallas at Chicago (dtd).

AFN-Sports, 3:30 p.m. — Motorcycle racing: AMA Supercross, 200 (dtd).

AFN-Sports, 7 p.m. — NFL: Kansas City at Tennessee.

Wednesday
AFN-Atlantic, 1 a.m. — College basketball: LSU women at Minnesota.

AFN-Sports and AFN-Radio, 1:30 a.m. — College football: New Orleans Bowl, 200 (dtd).

AFN-Sports, 3 a.m. — College basketball: Wake Forest at Duke (dtd).

AFN-Sports, noon — NBA: Denver at Philadelphia (dtd).

AFN-Sports, 3:30 p.m. — NFL: NFL's greatest games, 1987 AFC championship game at San Diego.

AFN-Sports, 6 p.m. — Pro basketball: L.A. Lakers at Seattle (dtd).

All times Central European time; dtd indicates delayed broadcast. All listings are subject to change. Visit www.afnradio.net for more information.

College basketball

AP Men's Top 25 fared

1. Illinois (9-0) beat Chicago State 78-59; beat Georgetown 74-59; beat Oregon 63-49.
2. Kansas (6-0) beat Texas Christian 69-54; beat Louisiana-Lafayette 96-51.
3. Georgia Tech (6-0) beat Iowa State 64-42; beat Virginia 69-56.
4. Syracuse (8-0) beat No. 5 Oklahoma State 74-60; beat Birmingham 85-65.
5. Oklahoma State (7-0) beat No. 4 Syracuse 66-46; beat Alabama-Birmingham 86-73.
6. Wake Forest (6-1) did not play.
7. Connecticut (4-1) beat Loyola of Chicago 109-81.
8. Kentucky (6-0) beat Morehead State 79-60; beat St. Francis 84-71.
9. North Carolina (7-1) beat Northeastern 74-60.
10. Duke (6-0) beat Toledo 82-54.
11. Kentucky (6-0) beat Morehead State 79-60; beat St. Francis 84-71.
12. North Carolina (7-1) beat Loyola of Chicago 109-81.
13. Louisville (5-1) beat Florida 74-70.
14. Texas (6-1) beat North Texas 86-57.
15. Arizona (6-2) beat Utah 67-62.
16. Washington (7-1) beat San Jose State 96-69; beat Maryland 100-83.
17. Alabama (8-1) beat Alabama State 76-73; beat Iowa State 76-63.
18. Alabama (8-1) beat Alabama State 76-73; beat Iowa State 76-63.
19. Virginia (6-2) beat Iowa State 81-79; beat Furman 79-69.
20. Michigan State (5-2) beat Stanford 76-53.
21. George Washington (6-1) beat St. Francis, Pa. 79-65.
22. Mississippi State (7-2) beat Arkansas-Little Rock 83-53.
23. Maryland (5-2) beat North Carolina 96-72.
24. Wisconsin (5-2) beat Wisconsin-Green Bay 86-50; lost to Marquette 68-64.
25. Georgia (7-1) beat Washington State 84-69; beat Saint Louis 80-64.

Sunday's men's scores

- EAST**
 Carnegie-Mellon 88, Wayne 71.
 Green Mountain 79, Cornell 69.
 Fairleigh Dickinson 82, Wagner 73.
 Saint Joseph's 80, Marquette 64.
 Skidmore 76, Centenary & Jefferson 61.
 York 71, Bryn Mawr 64.
 Yeshiva 69, Wesleyan 71.
WEST
 Bellarmine 90, Quincy 83.
 Christopher Newport 69, Randolph-Macon 66.
 Central Carolina 96, Averett 58.
 Duke 82, Toledo 54.
 Emory & Henry 66, Coker 60.
 Fla. International 65, Florida 60.
 Florida Southern 74, Nova Southeastern 67.
 Georgetown 89, Rhodes 74.
 Illinois-Chicago 76, N.C.-Wilmington 67.
 Maryland 82, N.C.-Asheville 72.
 Miami 80, Massachusetts 63.
 North Carolina 198, Loyola of Chicago 60.
 Oglethorpe 75, Hampton 64.
 South Alabama 77, Ark.-Monticello 62.
 UNL 76, St. Francis 69.
 W. Michigan 69, Col. Charleston 56.
MIDWEST
 Bemidji 52, Upper Iowa 53.
 Iowa State 92, Howard 75.
 Minn.-Duluth 69, Southwest St., Minn. 66.
 Missouri Valley 65, Columbia 60.
 NW Missouri St. 59, Chicago 54.
 Nebraska-Kearney 95, CSU-Pueblo 73.
 St. Cloud 57, Druy 69.
SOUTHWEST
 TCU 65, SMU 51.
 Texas-San Antonio 79, Louisiana Tech 71.
 Tulsa 67, Prairie View 64.
 UTEP 69, Panhandle 51.
FAR WEST
 Arizona 52, UC-Riverside 59.
 Cal Poly-SLO 58, Santa Clara 89.
 New Mexico 77, Ark.-Pine Bluff 53.

W. New Mexico 79, St. Edward's 60.
 Washington 100, Loyola Marymount 93.
TENNIS
Bard College Raptor Classic
 Newbury 67, Bard 62.

AP Women's Top 25 fared

- DEC. 6-12**
 1. LSU (6-0) did not play.
 2. Stanford (7-0) beat Pepperdine 85-49;
 3. Duke (9-1) beat Liberty 83-48.
 4. Texas (4-2) did not play.
 5. DePaul (6-0) beat No. 10 Central Carolina 94-52.
 6. Washington (7-1) beat Penn State 51-70.
 7. Notre Dame (9-1) beat Dayton 65-39;
 8. Washington (7-1) beat St. Bonaventure 62-39.
 9. Connecticut (4-1) beat Hartford 55-39.
 10. Tennessee (5-2) beat No. 15 DePaul 78-63.
 11. Ohio State (8-1) beat Nebraska 86-61.
 12. Ohio State (8-1) lost to Arizona State 67-51; beat Augusta State 93-47; beat No. 24 Arizona 70-62.
 13. Michigan State (9-1) beat Eastern Illinois 85-45; beat Detroit 73-64.
 14. Texas Tech (5-2) beat Miami 109-49; beat Oral Roberts 79-46; beat Mississippi 86-38.
 14A. Vanderbilt (7-1) lost to Western Kentucky 87-77; beat Saint Louis 94-53.
 15. DePaul (6-0) beat No. 10 Chicago 99-54; lost to No. 21 Purdue 69-51; lost to No. 20 Tennessee 69-51.
 16. Minnesota (8-1) beat Wisconsin-Green Bay 84-60; beat St. Francis 84-60.
 17. Boston College (7-1) beat Fordham 82-60; beat St. Francis 84-60.
 18. UCLA (6-1) beat Fresno State 92-76.
 19. Maryland (5-1) beat St. Bonaventure 91-42; beat Monmouth 114-81.
 20. Virginia (5-1) beat Virginia Tech 68-45.
 21. Purdue (6-2) beat No. 15 DePaul 69-61; beat Western Michigan 84-60.
 22. Houston (8-0) did not play.
 23. Washington (7-1) beat Oklahoma 81-45; lost to Utah 86-72.
 24. Oregon (6-2) lost to No. 11 Georgia 78-63.
 25. Kansas State (5-2) beat Missouri-Kansas City 63-33.

Sunday's women's scores

- EAST**
 Becker 80, Wesley 73.
 Dartmouth 66, Manhattan 52.
 St. Francis 84, St. Francis 84.
 Elizabeth City 73, West Liberty 72.
 Kings 64, Oronota 40.
 St. Francis 84, St. Francis 84.
 Massachusetts 59, Siena 49.
 Stony Brook 83, Bryant 70.
WEST
 Ark.-Little Rock 45, MVU 37.
 Duke 83, Liberty 48.
 Florida 82, Oregon 50.
 St. Francis 84, St. Francis 84.
 Gardner-Webb 60, Radford 58.
 George Washington 69, Va. Commonwealth 47.
 Georgetown 82, Godwin 42.
 Georgia 70, Arizona 62.
 Purdue 51, Jackson 55.
 Hampton 56, Norfolk 51.
 St. Francis 84, St. Francis 84.
 Kentucky 73, Marshall 55.
 Louisville 78, Kentucky 61.
 Maryland 84, Montclair 49.
 Morehead 58, Pikeville 52.
 N.C. State 90, Fort Hays 44.
 North Carolina 34, Coastal Carolina 52.
 Rhodes 82, Huntington 17.
 Samford 57, Alabama 36.
 South Florida 84, St. Louisiana 42.
 Tennessee 78, DePaul 63.
 Virginia Tech 77, St. Francis 84.
 Vanderbilt 84, Saint Louis 53.
 Virginia Tech 77, St. Francis 84.
 Wake Forest 70, East Carolina 47.
MIDWEST
 Cent. Michigan 75, Illinois-Chicago 64.
 Concordia, Moor 77, St. Mary's, Minn. 76.
 Evansville 84, Butler 77.
SOUTHWEST
 Minn.-Duluth 77, Southwest St., Minn. 63.
 Oakland, Mich. 79, Akron 66.
 Purdue 74, W. Michigan 42.
 W. Illinois 64, Illinois 65.
FAR WEST
 California 69, St. Mary's 64.
 Gonzaga 66, Boise State 57.
 Idaho 82, Oregon 66.
 Oregon 66, Colorado 57.
 Stanford 80, San Francisco 51.

TANK McNAMARA

WE PAID \$30 MILLION TO MAKE OUR "HEAVY" BRAND THE "OFFICIAL BEER OF THE NFL." MR. COMMISSIONER, HAD NOW YOU INTEND TO CUT OFF SALES OF OUR OFFICIAL BEER TO THE NFL? TALK ABOUT THE SECOND HALF?

BUT THIS FAN VIOLENCE...

BEER INC.

TOURNAMENT
Alumni Association Classic
 Fairmont 23, Louisville 56.
Third Place
 West Chester 60, Mass.-Lowell 51.

College football

Bowl glance
 Tuesday, Dec. 14
 Orange Bowl
 Payoff: \$750,000
 North Texas (7-4) vs. Southern Mississippi (6-5)

Tuesday, Dec. 21
Champs Sports Bowl
 At Orlando, Fla.
 Payoff: \$850,000
 Georgia Tech (6-5) vs. Syracuse (6-5)

Wednesday, Dec. 22
CMAC Bowl
 Mobile, Ala.
 Payoff: \$750,000
 Memphis (9-1) vs. Bowling Green (9-3)

Thursday, Dec. 23
Fort Worth Texas Bowl
 Payoff: \$750,000
 Cincinnati (6-5) vs. Oklahoma (6-5)

Las Vegas Bowl
 Payoff: \$750,000
 Wyoming (6-5) vs. UCLA (6-5)

Friday, Dec. 24
Hawaii Bowl
 At Honolulu
 Payoff: \$750,000
 UAB (7-4) vs. Hawaii (7-5)

MPG Computers Bowl
 Payoff: \$750,000
 Fresno State (5-1) vs. Virginia Tech (6-4)

Motor City Bowl
 Payoff: \$750,000
 Toledo (9-3) (7-1) vs. Cincinnati (6-5)

Tuesday, Dec. 28
Shirley P. Horn Bowl
 At Shepheard, La.
 Payoff: \$1.2 million
 Iowa State (6-5) vs. Miami (OHIO) (8-4)

At Phoenix
 Payoff: \$750,000
 Oregon State (6-5) vs. Notre Dame (6-5)

Wednesday, Dec. 29
Houston Bowl
 Payoff: \$1.1 million
 Texas A&M (9-3) vs. Colorado (7-4)

At San Antonio
 Payoff: \$1.1 million
 Ohio State (7-4) vs. Cincinnati (6-5)

Thursday, Dec. 30
Continental Tire Bowl
 At Charlotte, N.C.
 Payoff: \$750,000
 Boston College (9-3) vs. North Carolina (6-5)

Emerald Bowl
 At San Jose, Calif.
 Payoff: \$750,000
 New Mexico (7-4) vs. N.Y. (9-2)

San Diego Holiday Bowl
 Payoff: \$2.2 million
 California (10-1) vs. Texas Tech (7-4)

Silence Valley Classic
 At San Jose, Calif.
 Payoff: \$750,000
 Troy (7-4) vs. Northern Illinois (8-3)

Friday, Dec. 31
Musky City Bowl
 At Nashville, Tenn.
 Payoff: \$750,000
 Minnesota (6-5) vs. Alabama (8-1)

San Bowl
 Payoff: \$1.1 million
 Purdue (7-4) vs. Michigan (8-1)

Liberty Bowl
 Payoff: \$1.1 million
 Boise State (11-0) vs. Louisville (8-1)

Peac Bowl
 At Atlanta
 Payoff: \$2.2 million
 Miami (9-3) vs. Florida (7-4)

At Dunlap
 Payoff: \$1.1 million
 Cotton Bowl
 At Dallas
 Payoff: \$3 million
 Tennessee (6-5) vs. Texas Tech (7-4)

Outback Bowl
 At Tampa, Fla.
 Payoff: \$2.75 million
 Wisconsin (9-2) vs. Iowa (8-1)

Gator Bowl
 At Jacksonville, Fla.
 Payoff: \$1.6 million
 Florida State (8-1) vs. Wake Forest (8-3)

Capital One Bowl
 At Orlando, Fla.
 Payoff: \$1.6 million
 Virginia (6-5) vs. Virginia Tech (6-4)

At Tampa, Fla.
 Payoff: \$1.6 million
 Michigan (8-1) vs. North Carolina (6-5)

At Tampa, Fla.
 Payoff: \$1.6 million
 Michigan (8-1) vs. North Carolina (6-5)

At Tampa, Fla.
 Payoff: \$1.6 million
 Michigan (8-1) vs. North Carolina (6-5)

At Tampa, Fla.
 Payoff: \$1.6 million
 Michigan (8-1) vs. North Carolina (6-5)

At Tampa, Fla.
 Payoff: \$1.6 million
 Michigan (8-1) vs. North Carolina (6-5)

Rose Bowl
 At Pasadena, Calif.
 Payoff: \$3.5 million
 Michigan (9-2) vs. Texas (10-1)

At Tampa, Fla.
 Payoff: \$1.6 million
 Michigan (8-1) vs. North Carolina (6-5)

At Tampa, Fla.
 Payoff: \$1.6 million
 Michigan (8-1) vs. North Carolina (6-5)

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 Michigan (8-1) vs. North Carolina (6-5)

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Michael Kirk, England 71-73; 69-73-73-285
 Richard Finch, England 72-69-72-286
 Thomas, Wales 73-73-73-287
 Johan Eriksson, Sweden 70-74-71-287
 Martin Mearns, Wales 71-72-72-288
 Darren Fitchard, S. Africa 71-72-72-288
 Mark Fitchard, S. Africa 71-72-72-288
 Mark Fitchard, S. Africa 71-72-72-288
 Gary Houston, Wales 69-68-69-288
 Jon Norberg, Sweden 70-70-70-288

College soccer

Division I men's tournament

Men's College
 At The Home Depot Center
Semifinals
 Indiana 3, Maryland 2
 UC Santa Barbara 1, Ohio State 1
Championship
 Indiana 1, UC Santa Barbara 1, Indiana won 3-2 on penalty kicks

College volleyball

Division I women's tournament

Regional Finals
 At Green Bay, Wis.
 Stanford defeated Wisconsin 3-1, 31-29, 30-26.
 At Louisville, Ky.
 Southern California defeated Nebraska, 3-2 (31-29, 30-26, 30-26).
 At Minneapolis, Minn.
 Minnesota defeated Ohio State 3-2 (30-32, 32-30, 30-26, 30-25).
 Washington, D.C. UCLA 3-2 (37-30, 30-28, 24-15, 30-28).

Semifinals
 At Long Beach, Calif.
 Stanford defeated UCLA 3-1, 31-29, 30-28.
 At Washington (28-6) vs. Washington (28-2)

Championship
 Stanford defeated UCLA 3-1, 31-29, 30-28.

Semifinal winners
 Stanford defeated UCLA 3-1, 31-29, 30-28.

Deals

Weekend transactions

BASEBALL
American League
INDIANAS — Placed T. LHP Arthur Rhodes from Pittsburgh for R. Matt Leitch. Manager Nick Kennedy assigned athletic trainer.
ATLANTA BRUINS — Acquired RHP Chad Gaudin from Tampa Bay for R. Kevin Cash.

FOOTBALL
GOLETS FISH — Placed T. RB Robert Smith on the injured list. Activated G Luis Flores from the injured list.
ASTROS — Placed C Robert Smith on the injured list. Activated R. P. Damian Williams on the injured list.
ATLANTA BRUINS — Placed T. RB Robert Smith on the injured list. Activated C Curtis Borchart from the injured list.

FOOTBALL
NFL — Suspended Miami WR David Boston for four games for testing positive for steroids.
ATLANTA BRUINS — Placed T. RB Robert Smith on the injured list. Activated R. P. Damian Williams on the injured list.

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Dodgers GM says reports of trade for Hudson 'overblown'

BY JOHN NADEL

The Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Tim Lincecum might not be Los Angeles-bound after all.

Dodgers General Manager Paul DePodesta and his Oakland counterpart, Billy Beane, have talked extensively about Hudson at baseball's winter meetings.

But DePodesta denied a report that a deal was close to being completed.

"It has been overblown," DePodesta said late Sunday. "At times, it has been reported it was done. That was never the case. We continue to still talk with them."

"My understanding is they're still dealing with a lot of teams. They're exploring their options. They're not ready to do something yet."

Beane said the A's are "closer



Hudson

to a trade," but added he wouldn't say there's anything imminent.

"I don't think I can assume who or what you think it is," Beane said. "I don't think a real big deal is going to happen and you can decipher what you think is a big deal."

The 29-year-old Hudson, 12-6 with a 3.53 ERA last season, recently set a March 1 deadline for the A's to offer him a contract extension or he'll leave as a free agent following next season.

DePodesta said he and Beane know each other so well that they can get something done quickly if

it comes to that.

"We haven't even gotten to the point where we've made an offer," DePodesta said. "We've talked about specific players. We're on the same wave length in terms of players. I don't think there's much mystery on either side."

There shouldn't be, because the two are close friends and DePodesta was Beane's assistant in Oakland before taking the Dodgers' job last February.

"I don't think this is going to drag on indefinitely," DePodesta said. "I don't see it dragging on for two weeks. It's crazy how these things can go. Anything can come up."

DePodesta said published reports naming right-hander Edwin Jackson and infielder Antonio Perez in connection with a possible Hudson trade "aren't entirely accurate."

3B Koskie signs with Toronto on slow Sunday at winter meetings

BY RONALD BLUM

The Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — On a quiet day at the winter meetings, the only deal with a free agent was a preliminary agreement between third baseman Corey Koskie and the Toronto Blue Jays on a \$17 million, three-year contract.

There was just one trade, with the Blue Jays sending catcher Kevin Cash to Tampa Bay for right-hander Chad Gaudin.

A Seattle executive told an agent that the Mariners thought they were close to agreement on a three-year contract with Richie Sexson, who also was negotiating with Baltimore. An official of another team that had sought the first baseman said the deal being discussed averaged about \$11 million.

With the meetings wrapping up Monday, teams appeared more concerned about setting up the groundwork for future deals than actually finalizing swaps and contracts.

Carlos Beltran's agent discussed the All-Star center fielder with the Yankees, who also met with the agent for Pedro Martinez.

While New York manager Brian Cashman said he hadn't made an offer to Beltran, he refused to say whether he offered a contract to Martinez — a two-season Cy Young Award winner.

Oakland discussed trading Tim Lincecum to Los Angeles, Boston and St. Louis both went after shortstop Edgar Renteria, Tampa Bay talked with Jose Gonzalez and Anaheim attempted to reel in pitcher Matt Clement.

"There's really no movement forward but none backward since

Free agent roundup

yesterday," Angels General Manager Bill Stoneman said, describing his team's situation in the world that could be applied to the whole industry.

Since the meetings opened Friday, just three trades and three signings have been announced. Arizona reached a preliminary agreement Sunday on a one-year deal with shortstop Royce Clayton worth about \$1.3 million, and Cleveland moved close to a one-year agreement with second baseman Jose Hernandez.

It's not like the old days, when Jack McKeon and Roland Hemond set up shop ready to wheel and deal. In the age of e-mail, cell phones, complex guarantee language, physics and insurance, what used to be done with a handshake now needs lawyers and doctors to chime in.

Even when teams do make deals, they don't announce them until each clause in the letter of agreement has been approved and the last X-ray perused.

"I remember when I first started going to winter meetings, there were a lot more trades made, especially in the lobby of the hotel," New York Mets General Manager Omar Minaya said. "It's just a different day and age."

After meeting with agent Scott Boras, Cashman thought it would take a while to work out a deal for Beltran, likely to get the largest contract of the winter.

"We're barely out of the starting blocks on this," Cashman said.

The key date in the Beltran talks might be Jan. 8 — the last

day he can re-sign with the Houston Astros.

"That's one of the considerations," Boras said.

Minaya has been trying to sign Martinez and another starter, perhaps Odris Perez, and also a first baseman.

"We're still in dialogue. The fact that we're in dialogue means that we're still alive," he said of Martinez. "It gets to the point where you need some type of answer."

Boston General Manager Theo Epstein wouldn't give direct answers to questions about specific players.

"It's been another very busy day," he said. "There are a lot of hurdles left to climb, but there are a lot of good opportunities out there."

Anaheim appeared confident of adding pitching.

"We're going to get something done," Stoneman said. "We just don't have it done. You have to be patient. When all's said and done, we'll help ourselves in the 'pen. When all's said and done, we'll help ourselves in the rotation."

Koskie's deal is subject to an agreement on contract language and the infielder passing a physical, a baseball official familiar with the negotiations said on condition of anonymity.

The 31-year-old Canadian hit .251 with 25 homers and 71 RBIs last season for the Minnesota Twins, batting .276 with 26 homers and 103 RBIs in 2003, but his games decreased from 153 that year to 140 the following season, 131 in 2003 and 118 this year.

In Toronto, Koskie will take over at third base from Eric Hinske, the 2002 All-Rookie of the Year. Toronto either will move Hinske to first base or trade him.

Woods meets Challenge after disappointing year

By DOUG FERGUSON

The Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. — Tiger Woods didn't say anything new about his game.

He said it was great to see the changes in his swing start coming together. He said he no longer had a long checklist of swing thoughts when he stood over the ball.

He said he was close. Only now, Woods has some trophies to prove it.

With perhaps the most complete round of his season, Woods missed only one green and two fairways Sunday to close with a 68 and win the inaugural World Challenge by two shots over Padraig Harrington.

"Every shot I wanted to hit, I hit," Woods said.

DePodesta said the final 32 holes at Sherwood Country Club without a bogey and finished at 16-under 68, earning \$1.25 million that he donated to his foundation.

For guy who couldn't do much right this year — no PGA Tour stroke-play wins for the first time in his career, no majors for the second straight season — Woods didn't seem to do anything wrong heading into the short off-season.

It was his second straight stroke-play title, both after the PGA Tour season ended.

Late last month, he won the Dunlop Phoenix on the Japanese



Tiger Woods, right, hugs his father Earl after winning the Target World Challenge on Sunday in Thousand Oaks, Calif.

tour by going wire-to-wire for an eight-shot victory. On Sunday, he quickly erased a two-shot deficit to Colin Montgomerie, pulled ahead of Harrington with a bold drive and perfect pitch, then held off the Irishman by not missing a shot.

He must be excited for the 2005 season to get here.

"I am," Woods said. "After the Tour Championship, and going into it, it was exciting that the things I had been working on started to come together. It's nice not to have a big laundry list out there I have a key thought here and there and hit a golf shot."

Bryant accuses Malone of making pass at his wife

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Another Kobe conflict for the Lakers.

Bryant has accused Karl Malone of making a pass at his wife at a game last month.

Talking before Los Angeles' 105-98 victory over Orlando on Monday night, Bryant said he felt betrayed by a man he considered a friend.

"He was like a mentor, like a brother to me, so when something like that happens, you're upset, you're hurt," Bryant said.

He said he called Malone and told him, "Stay away from my wife. What's wrong with you? How could you?"

Malone was not available for comment Sunday, but agent Dwight Manley said Malone told him he had never made a pass at Bryant's wife, that he was surprised by the accusation, and that he was flattered by it. Bryant and his wife for any remarks she might have considered inappropriate.

Karl's response to Kobe's comment was that he's a basketball player and not a soap opera actor and he doesn't intend to be involved in a personal soap opera," Manley said of his client.

Asked if there might have been some misunderstanding, Bryant said, "What he said is what he said. I believe in my heart that it wasn't a misunderstanding."

Sports briefs

Indiana captures another NCAA men's soccer title

CARSON, Calif. — Jay Nolly saved two penalty kicks and Indiana won its second straight NCAA Men's College Cup title Sunday, beating UC Santa Barbara 3-2 in a penalty kick shoot-out.

The teams were tied 1-1 after regulation and two 10-minute overtime periods, forcing the shoot-out.

The second-seeded Hoosiers won for the 10th time in 11 games and earned their seventh NCAA title, the first under coach Mike Freiting, who replaced Jerry Yeagery this season.

Bertuzzi returns to ice

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Vancouver Canucks forward Todd Bertuzzi returned to the ice Sunday for the first time since being suspended for attacking Colorado Avalanche's Steve Moore, played in a charity game that included more than 30 locked out NHL players.

Bertuzzi received a standing ovation from the capacity crowd during pregame ceremonies. It was the All-Star forward's first public appearance in Vancouver since Aug. 26, when he pleaded not guilty to assault charges for sucker-punching Moore. His trial is scheduled to begin Jan. 17.

It's curtains for Jets after Bettis comes on

Steelers finally put Jets away as veteran shines in 4th quarter

BY ALAN ROBINSON

The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Just like the New England Patriots and Philadelphia Eagles before them, the New York Jets left Pittsburgh frustrated and confused after losing to perhaps the most surprising Steelers team in franchise history.

There was one difference: the Jets acted as if they wouldn't mind coming back.

Unlike their earlier routs of New England and Philadelphia, the Steelers (12-1) didn't overwhelm the Jets (9-4) during a tightly played 17-6 victory Sunday. It was 3-3 until early in the fourth quarter, when Jerome Bettis' running and passing made the difference in Pittsburgh's team record-tying 11th consecutive victory.

Maybe that's why Curtis Martin is looking forward to a possible return visit to his hometown during the playoffs, even if an exasperating day filled with penalties and failed opportunities slowed the Jets' drive to the postseason.

"I hope we come back here. I hate losing, period, but I especially hate losing here," Martin said. "I'd love to have a second chance."

Bettis is making the most of his second chance with Pittsburgh.

Demoted to the bench last season and rarely used early this season except during short-yardage situations, he carried the Steelers with a 10-yard touchdown pass to Jerome Tuman and a 12-yard TD run.



Jerome Bettis (36) ran for a touchdown and passed for one Sunday in pacing Pittsburgh to a 17-6 defeat of the New York Jets. Bettis also surpassed 130,000 career rushing yards.

On a day both Martin and Bettis surpassed the 130,000-yard career rushing mark, Martin said afterward, "I tip my hat to him" — and it wasn't because Bettis was wearing a brand-new AFC North championship cap.

Bettis is proving to be one of the Steelers' most valuable players. He had four

consecutive 100-yard games while substituting for injured Duce Staley, then replaced the ineffective Staley (16 carries, 51 yards) Sunday to key Pittsburgh's decisive fourth quarter.

Bettis' day was so productive that he hardly minded that Martin outrushed him 72-57 to overtake him for fifth place in

NFL career rushing. Martin has 13,046 yards to Bettis' 13,037. Only four others have reached 13,000 yards, and it was the first time in NFL history two did so in the same game.

"Really, Jerome won the game by himself," wide receiver Hines Ward said.

Chad Pennington blamed the loss on himself following a mistake-filled day in which he threw three interceptions — only one fewer than he had all season — and the Jets drew 12 penalties for 84 yards in the first half. They began the game as the NFL's second-least penalized team.

"We're going to go as far as I take the team. That's the way the NFL works," said Pennington, who was 17-for-31 for 189 yards. "I'm better than I played. There were just too many errant throws and bad reads. I didn't manage the game very well."

Steelers rookie quarterback Ben Roethlisberger could have said much the same thing, at least until the fourth quarter. He started 3-for-11, but completed six of his final eight throws to finish 9-for-19 for 144 yards.

"When the game was there in the fourth quarter, he never really fretted," coach Bill Cowher said.

If nothing else, that might explain how a Steelers team that is virtually unchanged from last season, except for adding Roethlisberger and Staley, is 12-1 — matching the best 13-game record in team history. They can become the first Steelers team to win 12 in a row if they beat the New York Giants (5-8) on Saturday.

"They made the plays, and that's what good teams do, what championship teams do," Jets coach Herman Edwards said. "Their guys played better than us in the fourth quarter."

San Diego's defense comes to the rescue

BY BERNIE WILSON

The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — LaDainian Tomlinson fumbled at a critical time. Drew Brees had two passes intercepted for the first time in three months.

The San Diego Chargers' defense got them all back, plus one more.

"When you're winning, the momentum goes to your side," linebacker Donnie Edwards said. "The bounces tend to go your way."

He should know. Edwards had two interceptions for his hometown Chargers on Sunday, returning the second 30 yards for the go-ahead touchdown with 4:09 left to help the Chargers beat Tampa Bay 31-24 for their seventh straight victory.

The Chargers (10-3) moved closer to their first playoff berth in nine seasons. They've won 10 games for the first time since their 1994 Super Bowl season, a huge turnaround from their recent misery of losing at least 10 games five times in the last seven seasons.

"I've been playing nine years and to get 10 wins is awesome," Edwards said. "These times don't come around too often, so to be advantage and keep on going."

It was the third straight week that the defense helped seal a vic-

tory and the second straight week the Chargers had four takeaways. They intercepted three passes off Brian Griese, and the quarterback also lost a fumble.

"Any time you have three turnovers, the defense is going to have to get the ball back for you," said Tomlinson, who gained 131 yards on 25 carries and scored on a 7-yard run that gave San Diego a 21-14 lead late in the third quarter.

But he also fumbled at the end of a 17-yard run with 8 minutes left and Tampa Bay's Dewayne White recovered at the San Diego 37.

Griese hit standout rookie Michael Clayton on a 20-yard touchdown pass with 6:53 left to tie it 21-21. Clayton, who appeared to push off cornerback Quentin Jammer, tipped the ball to himself with his right hand.

Clayton was the intended receiver on the pass Edwards picked off for the TD.

"That was huge," said Edwards, who ran over to the stands and gave the ball to an aunt who helped him growing up in a lower-middle-class neighborhood in National City, just south of downtown San Diego.

Griese made a desperation attempt to tackle Edwards, but ended up on his back as the linebacker ran into the end zone and raised both arms in celebration.



San Diego's Donnie Edwards had two interceptions, returning one for a touchdown, and also had 16 tackles Sunday in the Chargers' 31-24 victory over Tampa Bay.

Edwards said he knew the Buccaneers were going to throw a quick pass.

"I don't think he ever saw me," Edwards said.

"It's a shame, because it kind of wasted a good effort by our team," Griese said. "I feel bad."

A few minutes after Edwards' interception, the Chargers got the ball back when Inebrace Steve Foley hit Griese while he was scrambling, forcing a fumble that Shaun Phillips recovered. Rookie Nate Kaeding sealed it with a 40-yard field goal with 2:06 left.

Winning ugly just fine for struggling Denver

BY EDDIE PELLIS

The Associated Press

DENVER — The star tailback got benched and got his job back, all in one game. The streaky quarterback threw two interceptions, made an obscene gesture to his own fans and still walked out of it with a victory.

It was a strange, unsettling afternoon in Denver, where the Broncos eked out a 20-17 win over the woeful Miami Dolphins on Sunday despite the travails of fumble-prone Reuben Droughns and headbated Jake Plummer.

Tatum Bell ran for 123 yards after Droughns fumbled twice early, only to relinquish the job back to Droughns after he sprained his shoulder. Jason Elam kicked a 50-yard field goal with 2:50 left to bail the Broncos (8-5) out of the whole mess and keep them in the playoff hunt.

"We definitely needed that game to get some confidence back, get some swagger back," Elam said. "It helps us feel good about ourselves."

Or did it? Plummer's first interception was greeted by boos — not the first time the embattled quarterback has heard them in his season-plus in Denver. He responded by reaching his hand behind his head and making an obscene gesture to a fan after he sat down on the bench.

The scene was caught by TV cameras.

"One guy got into my head a little bit, it shouldn't be that way," Plummer said. "I'm an emotional guy. I apologize. ... I would never direct that at our fans. We have the greatest fans in the league."

Playing before an announced sellout crowd that included nearly 5,100 no-shows, the Broncos snapped a two-game losing streak and started the week as Baltimore for the AFC's final playoff spot. But they hardly looked like playoff material on this, a day in which they got pushed to the edge by one of the worst teams in the league.

"We fought," was about the best thing coach Mike Shanahan could say about the win. "We just had to keep on fighting until you got tired, and that is what I was proud of."

The Dolphins (2-11) weren't out of it until A.J. Feeley threw in-complete to Derritus Thompson on fourth-and-3 with 1:59 left — a play on which Drew Brees called Kelly Herndon appeared to be draped all over Thompson before the ball arrived.

"We should have had the catch," Miami coach Jim Bates said. "The guy was mad at Drew behind his back. The ball was thrown right there."

Plummer finished 16-of-30 for 219 yards.

Manning falls short of TD record

BY JOEL ANDERSON

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — No. 45 was a simple 3-yard flection to his favorite target. No. 46 was vintage Peyton Manning, a 12-yard bullet between two defenders.

Nos. 47, 48 and 49 will have to wait.

Don Marino's record will stand for at least another week or two.

Manning came up short in his bid to tie Marino's 20-year-old NFL mark of 48 touchdown passes in a season, throwing only two Sunday in the Indianapolis Colts' 23-14 victory over the Houston Texans.

He has three more games to break the record, though the task figures to get much tougher. The Colts will face Baltimore, San Diego and Denver — three of the NFL's top-11 defenses — to close out the regular season.

"Honestly, I was hoping against hope that we'd get it down here so we can be done with it," Colts coach Tony Dungy said. "I'm sure it will get bigger each week. We'll just have to deal with it."

Manning threw touchdown passes on the Colts' first two drives, but Indianapolis (10-3) didn't get into the end zone again. For the first time in nine games, Manning had fewer than three TD passes.

He still broke one of Marino's records, just not the one everybody is talking about.

It was his 13th straight multi-TD game, breaking a record held by Marino, Johnny Unitas, Don Meredith and Brett Favre. Unitas was the only other to do it at the beginning of a season, for the Colts 45 years ago in the midst of his record 47 straight games with a TD pass.

After Manning's fast start, the Colts settled for three field goals by Mike Vanderjag (30, 43 and 44 yards) in the second half.

"That's how it's going to be sometimes," receiver Brandon Stokley said. "You can't score 40 points every time."

The way Manning started Sunday, it looked as if he would catch Marino by half-time.

Seven plays after Jason David intercepted a pass by David Carr at the Texans 38, Manning threw a 3-yard TD pass to Marvin Harrison — the 81st between Manning and Harrison, the second-most for a quarterback-receiver duo behind 85 by Steve Young and Jerry Rice.

The Texans (5-8) then went three-and-out, and Indianapolis went 72 yards on eight plays — four passes and four runs by James.

Manning fired a ball to Wayne in the end zone despite tight coverage with 3:37 left in the first quarter to put the Colts up 14-0.

"It doesn't matter what you do in those other three quarters," Texans defensive lineman Robaire Smith said. "You can't spot a good team 14 points and expect to win."

But Manning and the Colts were sloppy at times, in one sequence having three penalties in a four-play stretch.

The only other time Manning threw into the end zone, Stokley made a diving attempt on a ball in the third quarter just before Vanderjag's 30-yard field goal for a 17-7 lead.

Manning later missed on two wide-open throws that could have gone for scores, one to Harrison in the third and another that sailed just out of Reggie Wayne's reach in the fourth.

He finished 26-for-33 for 298 yards.

Egderman James ran for 104 yards on 28 carries, and had seven catches for 54 yards.

Afterward, Manning put on a happy face when questions about the record he didn't get came up — repeatedly — in the locker room. It was a lot easier to smile, of course, when he placed a brand new black AFC South champions cap atop his sweaty head.



Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning threw two touchdown passes in the Colts 23-14 win over the Texans.

"I'm really enjoying the ride," said Manning, who led the Colts to their fifth playoff berth in his seven season. "I threw 29 last year and it felt like a lot."

Dominick Davis had 201 total yards for Houston, which lost for the fifth time in the past six games.

Falcons wrap up NFC South

BY PAUL NEWBERRY

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — The Atlanta Falcons took a little time to celebrate their NFC South title. Then it was back to work.

Clearly, the Falcons have lofty goals than just a division championship.

"This is exciting, but it's just a step on the way to the big prize," defensive lineman Travis Hall said Sunday. "What we really want to do as a team is get to the Super Bowl — and win."

Still, this was a landmark event in Atlanta's NFL history.

T.J. Duckett set a team record by rushing for four touchdowns and the Falcons clinched just the third division title in franchise history, wrapping up the NFC South with a 35-10 rout of the Oakland Raiders.

When it was over, rookie coach Jim Mora grabbed the game ball and "with his 9-year-old son at his side — held it aloft for the fans as he walked off the field."

"I haven't been here very long, so it's hard to grasp what it means," Mora said. "But I could see the looks on their faces. I could see they appreciated it."

Atlanta, which last won a division title in 1998 on the way to its only Super Bowl, bounced back from a 29-0 loss at Tampa Bay that day to the celebration.

Not that it was much of a party. The Falcons (10-3) built a 35-3 lead over the Raiders, so most of the Georgia Dome sellout didn't get around to the end. In the locker room afterward, Mora gave the ball to owner Arthur Blank, and the players wore black



Atlanta Falcons running back T.J. Duckett (45) scores the first of his four touchdowns against the Oakland Raiders on Sunday.

caps noting their division championship.

That was about it. No champagne. No cigars.

"This is nice," Mora said, "but there are other things we want to do."

The Falcons' less-than-stellar history is apparent from the banners hanging from the Georgia Dome roof. There are only three, marking division titles in 1980 and '98, along with the NFC championship in that latter season.

Now, it's time to put up a fourth.

The Falcons had their way against the hapless Raiders, seizing control with a 21-point second quarter.

Appropriately, Hall was in on the biggest play. One of just two

holdovers from Atlanta's last championship team, he deflected a pass by Oakland's Kerry Collins late in the first half.

The ball went right to former Raiders defensive tackle Rod Coleman, who returned the interception 39 yards for a touchdown that gave the Falcons a commanding 21-3 lead at the break.

Oakland (4-9) had three turnovers and didn't reach end zone until Jack Crockett's meaningless TD with just under 3½ minutes remaining.

"You turn the ball over like we did and you just really make it hard on yourself," coach Norv Turner said.

After going 5-11 a year ago, Atlanta has reached double figures wins for only the fourth time in its 39-year history.

Patriots edge Bengals to clinch AFC East title

BY HOWARD ULMAN

The Associated Press

FOXBORO, Mass. — From where Tom Brady sits, he always sees a chance to make a play until the whistle blows. Even when he's sitting on the ground.

That's where he was when he threw a completion Sunday in a 35-28 win over the Cincinnati Bengals in which the New England Patriots clinched the AFC East title with their 27th victory in 28 games.

"I wish I would have seen it," said left tackle Matt Light, who was busy blocking. "When you're an ultracompetitive player like that, there's never a point where you just stop [and say] 'that's impossible.' That's his attitude. Some way or another, it's going to work out."

The game didn't work out for the Bengals (6-7) even though they outgained the Patriots 478 yards to 351. Cincinnati, which won four of its previous five games, committed three harmful turnovers while the Patriots (12-1) committed none.

"When you play a Super Bowl defensive champion team like that, you just can't make mistakes," Bengals quarterback Carson Palmer said. "That's why there are no good."

On the play on which he fell, Brady thought he tripped over a running back moving to pick up a blitz. From a seated position, he saw a star player fall left-side to Patrick Pass for a 7-yard gain early in the third quarter.

"It happened so fast, I realized I had a little time and I tried to get my eyes over there," Brady said. "I didn't want to do that too often. The percentages are against you on a play like that."

It's such a rare play that Brady can't remember it happening to him in a game.

"Probably never," he said. "My dad and my sisters used to throw me on the ground and then I would be firing stuff [at them]."

After Pass' catch, Brady ran 2 yards for a first down then completed his next four passes. The last was a 17-yard touchdown that a wide-open Christian Fauria leaped for and the Patriots led 35-14 after the first series of the third quarter.

The Bengals came back, even though Palmer left the game late with a sprained left knee. He was on crutches after the game, and coach Marvin Lewis said his condition was day-to-day.

"I felt a little pop," Palmer said. "I should be OK to play."

His last drive led to Kyle Larson's 11-yard touchdown run on a fake field goal. The Bengals then reached the Patriots 10 early in the fourth quarter, but Troy Brown intercepted Jon Kitna's pass in the end zone.

Then Kitna threw a 27-yard scoring pass to Kelley Washington, and the Bengals trailed just 35-28 with 3:30 left. But they never got the ball back.

"We've lost games because we've made key mistakes," Washington said. "We've moved the ball. We have the talent. But we're not mature enough yet."

The Bengals took the opening kickoff and marched to the Patriots' 12-yard line. Then Rod Johnson fumbled and Willie McGinest recovered. The Patriots went 84 yards and scored on a 1-yard run by Corey Dillon, and they scored first for the 18th straight game, an NFL record.



Green Bay Packers defenders Kabeer Gbaja-Biamila, Grady Jackson (75) and Nick Barnett (56) wrap up Detroit Lions running back Kevin Jones (34) during the fourth quarter Sunday in Green Bay, Wis.

Packers haul down Lions

Detroit blows 13-point lead, falls back in NFC North

BY ARNIE STAPLETON
The Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Brett Favre always sees it that the Detroit Lions' flight home over Lake Michigan isn't short and sweet.

The Lions blew a 13-point half-time lead and a big chance to get back into the playoff picture in the muddled NFC North on Sunday when they lost 16-13 to Green Bay in a game in which they only trailed for the final 2 seconds.

They sure felt good about their chances of winning in Wisconsin for the first time since 1991, the year before Favre's arrival, when Ahmad Green's 79-yard touchdown on a screen pass was negated by a debatable holding call on rookie center Scott Wells in the third quarter with Detroit leading 13-3.

The Packers were backed up to their 13 and starting straight into a flag-snapping 35 mph wind and swirling snow flurries. But Wells swirled off the penalty, and nine plays later, Favre split Bracy Walker and Keith Smith for a 23-yard touchdown throw to Donald Driver.

Ryan Longwell added fourth-quarter field goals of 28 and 23 yards as the Packers (8-5) overtook Minnesota, who lost at home to Seattle, atop the NFC North. The Lions fell to 5-8.

Wells, who started for Grey Ruesgarner (ankle), thought his block on weakside linebacker James Davis that sprung Green Bay during the second wave of defenders was legal.

"I was running down the field. I was probably on the other 30-yard line. So, I threw my arms up in the air for the touchdown and I turned around and saw the flag," Wells said.

He was disappointed but not surprised.

"I'm kind of laid back so I kind of laughed it off. I disagreed with the call. I thought it was a good block," Wells said. "It's frustrating any time they take points off the board, especially when they call your number out for it. But luckily we were able to keep the drive going and put some points on the board."

Although Longwell would win it with his 43rd straight conversion inside 40 yards, coach Mike Sherman said the resolve his of-

fense showed after the holding penalty was the key to the comeback.

"To be able to overcome that devastation, because we're struggling and we're struggling and we're struggling, and to be able to have it and then take it away, I think it shows the determination of our guys to keep fighting," Sherman said. "I thought that was a telling moment."

Favre led Green Bay back from a 13-0 halftime deficit by completing 16 of 21 passes for 160 yards in the second half after going just 3-for-15 for 28 yards in the first half.

Snow flurries dampened the field into what Longwell called a "swampy mess" and swirling wind wreaked havoc on passes, punts and long snaps and caused a slew of drops.

"I've always said there is nothing routine about a field goal and today there was nothing routine about extra points," Longwell said.

Detroit quarterback Joey Harrington completed just 5 of 22 passes for 47 yards as the Lions relied on rookie running back Kevin Jones, who rushed 33 times for 156 yards and a touchdown.

Panthers in playoffs?

It's not so far-fetched after win over Rams

BY JENNA FRYER
The Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Don't mention records, scores or what-if scenarios to the Carolina Panthers. They have no interest in what it will take to make the playoffs.

So focused on their one-game-at-a-time philosophy, the Panthers had no idea their 20-7 victory over St. Louis on Sunday put them in a tie for the final NFC wild-card berth.

"The only scoreboard we watch is ours," defensive tackle Brenson Buckner said. "If we don't control our scoreboard, the rest of it doesn't matter."

Right now, Carolina (6-7) is certainly in control.

But they got a lot closer as well as they did during their run to the Super Bowl last season, won their fifth straight to climb into the playoff hunt. They are tied with the Rams (6-7) for the final berth, but own the head-to-head tiebreaker.

It was an unimaginable position after the Panthers opened 0-7 and started after starter to season-ending injuries.

"Look, we don't even have a winning record yet," quarterback Jake Delhomme cautioned. "We are still a ways away."

But they got a lot closer as well as they did during their run to the Super Bowl last season, won their fifth straight to climb into the playoff hunt. They are tied with the Rams (6-7) for the final berth, but own the head-to-head tiebreaker.

Feeding off the defense, the Panthers got touchdowns from Muhsin Muhammad and Nick Goings and two field goals from John Kasay in a rematch of January's thrilling NFC divisional playoff.

But this one wasn't nearly as dramatic as Carolina's 29-23 win in double overtime, mainly because the teams are very different than they were in January.

For starters, 10 of Carolina's 22 regulars from that game are either no longer with the Panthers or out with injuries. St. Louis (6-7) was without star running back Marshall Faulk, and started 39-year-old Chris Chandler at quarterback because Marc Bulger is hurt.

But the stakes were just as high, at least for Carolina.

"It's a playoff game for us



CHARLOTTE OBSERVER/RET

Panthers running back Nick Goings (37) leaps over the St. Louis Rams defender for a touchdown in the first quarter of Carolina's 20-7 victory on Sunday.

every time we go on the field," cornerback Ricky Manning Jr. said. "This is it for us. The hole we put ourselves in, the only way out of it is to win every game and keep the season going."

Manning took the first step, intercepting Chandler on the Rams' first series to set up Carolina's first touchdown. It was Manning who set up Carolina's playoff victory, as well, when he ended a St. Louis drive by wrestling the ball away from Torry Holt to give the Panthers possession for their winning drive.

Dan Morgan, back from a three-game absence with a concussion, had two interceptions to the Manning for the team lead, and Will Witherspoon and rookie Chris Gamble each added a pick.

Morgan had no idea which of the six interceptions meant the most.

"There were so many, I forgot all of them," he said.

Making his first start in over a year, Chandler wasn't crisp.

But the 17-year veteran still made a handful of athletic plays, including a 52-yard touchdown pass to Isaac Bruce that was negated by a holding call.

Chandler did throw a 75-yard TD pass to Holt at the end of the first quarter, when the Rams converted on third-and-9. Chandler finished 16-for-29 for 243 yards, one touchdown, six interceptions and was sacked three times.

carrier.
Holt, Rams, had 151 yards and a touchdown on six catches in a 20-7 loss to Carolina.

Running backs

■ Clinton Portis, Titans, had 201 total yards for Houston. He had 23 carries for 147 yards and a touchdown, and caught six passes for 13 yards.

■ Mike McRae, Panthers, had 107 yards and scored twice in a 37-7 win over Tampa Bay.

■ Eddie Johnson, Colts, ran for 104 yards and a touchdown on 20 carries. Catches for 54 yards in a 23-14 win over Baltimore.

■ Nick Goings, Panthers, ran for 108 yards and a touchdown on 10 carries in a 20-7 win over St. Louis. The sixth-straight running back to lead in rushing yards in a win. Goings' role has now run for 100 yards of rushing in all four of his starts.

■ Todd Peterson, 49ers, kicked a 34-yard field goal to give the San Francisco 49ers a 31-28 overtime win over Arizona.

Special teams

■ Jason Elam, Broncos, kicked a 20-yard field goal to give Denver a 20-17 win over Miami.

■ Paul Longwell, Packers, kicked a 22-yard field goal with 2 seconds remaining to give Green Bay a 16-13 win over St. Louis. It was Longwell's third game-winning kick in his career.

■ Todd Peterson, 49ers, kicked a 34-yard field goal to give the San Francisco 49ers a 31-28 overtime win over Arizona.

Sunday's NFL stars:

- Peyton Manning, Colts, was 25-of-33 for 298 yards and two touchdowns, getting within two of Dan Marino's 30-year-old record of 48 TDs in a season in a 21-14 win over the Texans.
- Matt Hasselbeck, Seahawks, went 23-of-34 for 334 yards, passing and three touchdowns in a 27-23 win over Minnesota.
- Kyle Bolter, Ravens, threw for a career-high four touchdowns and 210 yards in a 37-14 rout of the Giants.

Receivers

- Dante Stallworth, Saints, had 113 yards on five catches, in a 27-13 win over Dallas.
- Randy Moss, Vikings, caught four passes for 104 yards and a touchdown, but threw a crucial interception in a 27-23 loss to the Seahawks.
- Mike McRae, Panthers, had 10 receptions for 136 yards and a touchdown, but was held out over the Vikings after learning in the morning his father had died of



Weis will coach Irish ... and Patriots

Willingham heads back to Pac-10; Stanford hires Pitt coach Harris

The Associated Press

Charlie Weis landed Tyrone Willingham's old job at Notre Dame.

Walt Harris was tapped to take over at Stanford, where Willingham led the Cardinal to the 2000 Rose Bowl.

Meanwhile, Willingham himself was hired by Washington on Sunday as three high-profile head coaching positions were filled and another came open.

Brigham Young was also set to announce a new coach Monday, with The Salt Lake Tribune and Deseret Morning News reporting that defensive coordinator Bronco Mendenhall was expected to get the job that opened when Gary Crowton resigned.

Weis said his job as Notre Dame's coach is to raise expectations and win games.

"That's the bottom line in this business," he said Monday at a news conference. "Graduating kids is the first and foremost thing. ... Bringing in character kids is important. But it's all about winning games. That's why there's a coaching change."

Weis, the New England Patriots' offensive coordinator, graduated from Notre Dame in 1978, but never played football for the Irish.

He agreed to a six-year deal that will pay him a reported \$2 million annually. His hiring ended an awkward two weeks for the Fighting Irish that began with the firing of Willingham.

Willingham's three-year tenure was the shortest of any full-time coach at Notre Dame in 70 years. He had three years left on his initial contract, but was let go after going 6-5. Notre Dame had made a tradition of allowing its coaches to at least work through the length of their first contract.

Last week, outgoing Notre Dame president the Rev. Edward Malloy criticized Willingham's firing and expressed concern over a growing trend of schools that are searching for "messiah coaches."

Notre Dame took more hits when its first choice to replace Willingham, Utah coach Urban Meyer, took an offer from Florida.

That sent the Irish searching and eventually looking to Weis, a longtime NFL assistant who has never been a head coach.

The 48-year-old Weis arrived at the school Sunday night, just hours after the Patriots beat Cincinnati in Foxboro, Mass. Within an hour, he met with the players.



Former Notre Dame coach Tyrone Willingham will return to the Pac-10 as Washington's third head coach in four seasons. He previously coached at Stanford.

"As I told the team, one of the problems is because expectations were not met," Weis said Monday. "You are what you are. And right now that's a 6-5 football team, and that's just not good enough. It's not good enough for me. If you think they hired me to go .500, you've got the wrong guy."

He will stay with New England through the NFL playoffs, juggling both jobs.

Not long before Weis' arrival in South Bend, Ind., Washington announced that it was bringing Willingham back to the Pac-10.

The Huskies, who play the Irish on Sept. 24 in Seattle, are coming off a school-worst 1-10 season and still trying to recover from a messy divorce with former coach Rick Neuheisel before the 2003 season.

Keith Gilbertson replaced Neuheisel, who was fired for gambling on NCAA basketball, but couldn't keep Washington from sinking to the bottom of the Pac-10. Gilbertson stepped down after the season. The Huskies made initial contact with Willingham while he was still employed by Notre Dame, and when he was fired he became a prime candidate.

"I am excited about being here," Willingham said.



Charlie Weis leaves the Joyce Center on Sunday ahead of Notre Dame athletic director Kevin White. Weis signed a six-year contract to coach the Fighting Irish, but will continue to serve as the New England Patriots' offensive coordinator throughout the NFL playoffs.

Willingham was 21-15 in three seasons at Notre Dame — but after an 8-0 start in 2002, the Irish went 13-15. Before going to Notre Dame, Willingham coached Stanford from 1995-2001. He went 44-36-1 with the Cardinal.

Harris will try to get them back after three unsuccessful seasons' under Buddy Teevens, who replaced Willingham in 2003.

Stanford was looking for a coach with a strong offensive background after the Cardinal struggled to score during Teevens' tenure.

The Cardinal went 4-7 the past two seasons, losing their last five games this year.

Harris was Ohio State's quarterbacks coach in 1995-96 before going to Pitt. He has led the Panthers to three straight seasons with eight or more wins.

But he also has ties to the Bay Area. He grew up in South San Francisco and attended college at Pacific in Stockton.

Stanford athletic director Ted Leland also hired Harris to coach Pacific in 1989.

Harris' eighth season with Pittsburgh has been one of his most successful. The Panthers started 2-2 and there was talk that Harris, in the last year of his contract, would be replaced at season's end.

But the Panthers won six of their final seven to earn their first spot in the Bowl Championship Series.

Harris and AD Jeff Long met last week but couldn't agree on a contract extension, so the coach resigned Sunday.

Pitt plays Utah in the Fiesta Bowl in Jan. 1, and Harris is expected to coach the team.

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SPORTS



Bryant accuses Malone of making pass at his wife, then helps Lakers beat Magic, Pages 24, 25

4 score with 3 games to go

Steelers, Pats, Colts, Falcons win to lock up division titles

The Associated Press

Four teams took the first big step toward the Super Bowl by clinching division titles, joining the Philadelphia Eagles, who already wrapped up the NFC East crown.

Defending Super Bowl champion New England won the AFC East when it beat Cincinnati 35-28 and the New York Jets lost at Pittsburgh 17-6.

Pittsburgh's victory also earned the Steelers the AFC North title.

Indianapolis captured the AFC South with a 23-14 victory at Houston, and Atlanta took the NFC South when it beat Oakland 35-10.

The Steelers and Patriots, though, still have a lot on the line in the last three weeks — home-field advantage throughout the playoffs. Both are 12-1, but Pittsburgh holds the tiebreaker because it beat New England.

"Everybody keeps waiting for us to have a letdown, but each week someone steps up and makes big plays," Steelers receiver Hines Ward said after Pittsburgh won its 11th straight with rookie Ben Roethlisberger as the starting quarterback.

Roethlisberger was only 9-for-19 for 144 yards but Jerome Bettis made up for it by throwing for a touchdown and running for another, both in the fourth quarter.

"Really, Jerome won the game by himself," Ward said.

The Patriots got key plays from quarterback Tom Brady (two touchdown passes), their defense (two red zone turnovers) and running back Corey Dillon against Dillon's old team, the Bengals, to get to the playoffs for the third time in four years, but Dillon's first time in eight years.

"We are excited about [the division title]," Patriots safety Rodney Harrison said. "We will enjoy this victory for a day or two."

T.J. Duckett set a Falcons team record by rushing for four touchdowns to secure just the third division crown in Atlanta's history, but there was little celebration.

"This is exciting, but it's just a step on the way to the big prize," defensive lineman Travis Hall said Sunday. "What we really want to do as a team is get to the Super Bowl — and win."

In Houston, the Texans allowed Peyton Manning only two touchdown passes — he still needs two to tie Dan Marino's record 48 — but they couldn't keep the Colts from winning their second straight AFC South title.

"We got what we wanted today, and that was to win," Manning said.

■ See game coverage on Pages 27-30



AP photos

Clockwise from above: ■ Steelers running back Jerome Bettis celebrates a fourth quarter touchdown run against the Jets. Bettis also threw for a fourth-quarter score as Pittsburgh won the AFC North with the victory. ■ Colts QB Peyton Manning (18) threw two early touchdown passes, but that was it, leaving him two short of Dan Marino's record 48. Still, Indianapolis won the AFC South for a second straight year by beating the Texans. ■ Patriots cornerback Asante Samuel (22) is congratulated by teammate Rodney Harrison after Samuel returned an interception 34 yards for a touchdown in their victory over Cincinnati. That, coupled with the Jets loss to the Steelers, secured the AFC East for New England. The Patriots and Steelers are tied atop the AFC with 12-1 records. ■ Falcons quarterback Michael Vick (7) and running back T.J. Duckett exchange high fives in the second half. Duckett ran for four TDs as Atlanta wrapped up the NFC South by whipping the Raiders.



Weis, Willingham, Harris fill high-profile coaching vacancies Page 31